

## Why Do Some Christians Die Too Young? Plus More Q&A

(April 11, 2023)

### Frank:

Ladies and gentlemen, I got a question from Mack who writes "Hi, Frank, I wanted to ask you a question that has troubled a lot of my family. My fiancé's cousin died in a car accident almost a year ago. He was a Christian and a true believer. He was killed in a head on crash on the interstate, and the guy was driving on the wrong side of the road. My father-in-law has questioned, why? Why was Luke killed? My father-in-law is a believer of 40 years. He just does not believe that Lucas's time, being only 20 years old, that it was his time. He also does not believe that God with the saying that quote, 'God was ready to take him, and it was his time to go.' He said that he cannot find answers in Scripture to understand why this tragedy would happen. I told him, what you say about the domino effect and something good will come from the tragedy, but he still wants to know why. He also wonders, why does God let people who are believers suffer with cancer? He wants scriptural answers, and I thought I would reach out to you and ask. So, if you could please help me with this issue, that'd be greatly appreciated."

So, this is one question we're going to delve into a little bit today. We also have questions on abortion. Questions on, how do we know what we know? And Frank, you keep saying Jeremiah 29:11 is not a promise to Christians in the 21st century? Well, what does apply from the Old Testament? That question as well. So, let's go back to what Mack said. And this is a long answer. In fact, I wrote back to Mack via email. And I said, actually, we covered that whole question in a chapter in the book, "Stealing from God: Why Atheists Need God to Make Their Case."

In fact, the best time to get answers to questions like this, is before you need them. Get prepared, because everybody's going to experience evil, pain, and suffering at some point. You might as well do your research now. Because when the rawness of the event actually occurs, when you lose a loved one like this, you can be despondent for days, weeks, months, maybe even years if you're not prepared. It's the old adage, when's the best time to get a friend? Before you need one. When is the best time to get answers to the problem of evil? Before you go through it.

Some questions require a lot longer than what you can say, in an email, or what you can even say here on radio or podcast. So, this is going to be a short answer. But the longer answer is in the chapter in "Stealing from God", on evil. Well, whenever you get a question like this, you always have to decipher whether you're dealing with a pastoral issue or a philosophical issue. Do you want to give the pastoral answer or the philosophical answer? Now, it seems that the father-in-law that Mack writes about needs more of a pastor than he needs a philosopher. It's really hard to deal with evil from a philosophical perspective when you're hurting.



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Now, I'm just going to give the philosophical answer here because I'm not a pastor, number one. And I don't have an opportunity to interact with Mack's father-in-law. But I guess the question I would ask people is, does God promise all believers that they will live long, healthy lives? No, of course not. It almost seems like it's an assumption that if you're a believer, you're going to live a long, healthy life. In fact, some of this may be a hangover from the Old Testament Old Covenant. That we actually think that we're promised health and wealth to a certain extent. That isn't completely the case in the Old Testament, but there are elements of it.

I'm thinking of Malachi, you know, bring your tithe to the temple and your barns will overflow, that kind of promise. That was an Old Covenant concept. It's not a promise in the New Covenant. Although, God may prosper you obviously. But it's not a promise. And people die young. Sometimes they're believers that die young. I mean, did Jesus and the apostles live long, healthy lives? No, the opposite. In fact, Jesus said in this life, you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world. And He said, if they persecuted me, they're going to persecute you. And Paul said, anyone who lives a faithful life in Christ Jesus, will be persecuted. So, we should expect that we're going to have trouble in this life. And we need to take an eternal perspective.

In fact, Paul, actually ends a brilliant section on pain and suffering in 2 Corinthians 4, where he says, "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us a greater weight of glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes, not on what is seen, for what is seen is temporary. We fix our eyes on what is unseen, for what is unseen is eternal." This life is not the end all be all. There will be things that happen in this life that are not only inexplicable but will test your faith. But if you realize your faith is not dependent on everything being explained or is not dependent on you understanding why certain things occur, then, when you go through a difficulty like this, at least you won't say, well, God has broken His promise.

In fact, God has never promised us that we would live to 80 years old. He never promised us that we wouldn't have difficulty. He promised the opposite, that we would have difficulty. So, Paul says that our light and momentary afflictions, meaning the difficulties we go through here on earth, will actually achieve a greater weight of glory, in eternity. And what He means by that, I believe, is that, when you go through difficulty, you enhance your capacity to enjoy God, not only now, but in eternity. When you really go through difficulty and achieve something, that achievement is worth more because of the difficulty you went through. I always use the analogy of sports, you know. If a player is maligned, but then somehow fights through all the adversity and wins the Super Bowl, he felt better about winning the Super Bowl, because he went through all the difficulty.

That quarterback who wins the MVP award in the Super Bowl, feels a whole lot better than the third string quarterback who is on the Super Bowl winning team, but didn't play a down all year. Why? Because the first string quarterback went through all the difficulty, which made the victory all that much sweeter. It seems like Paul is saying something similar when it comes to real life here. We have to keep an eternal perspective. Difficulty brings forth an enhanced capacity to

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enjoy God and enjoy the reward. Now, there's another aspect to this, and that is the ripple effect. You mentioned it in the question Mack, you said the domino effect. I prefer the ripple effect. Because things ripple forward. Every event that occurs in this life ripples forward to effect trillions of other events in this life, some of them way down the road.

Can I answer you why, tragically, Lucas was killed in a car accident? Do I know what the ripple effect will give me? No, I don't. I don't know what's going to happen with the ripple effect. But I know why I don't know why. I'm inside of time, God is outside of time. He can see how this is all going to work out in the end. We can't. You say, why doesn't God explain it to us? Well, two things. Let me point this out. Let's suppose God were to say, one of the reasons, or one of the goods that comes out of someone dying now, is going to bring forth a great evangelist 500 years from now that saves millions of people. Partially responsible, or the death today was partially responsible for the evangelist that arises 500 years from now. Okay, I can see, that's a good thing that good has come out of this tragedy. But does that make me feel any better right now? No, not really.

Okay, great. Five hundred years from now, people are going to be saved because my cousin died, or my son died. Okay. It doesn't really take away much of the pain, does it? No. It doesn't really take away much of the pain. And the second aspect is, if God told us what good would come from every difficulty we experienced, that might change our behavior in a way that wouldn't precipitate the good that was supposed to come from it. So, to a certain extent, it might be, He has to leave us in the dark so the actual good event will come to fruition. And we explain this in the evil chapter in "Stealing from God." So, if you want to go further, please get that.

And by the way, there's another good thing that comes out of evil. It's that people step up and actually help others. People are actually blessed when they have to, or may decide to, step up and help others through difficulty, through pain and suffering. Those of you watching on YouTube, or see the video, I'm wearing a hat right now. This is from the Billy Graham Association. This is their law enforcement hat. And I'm wearing a shirt from Samaritan's Purse. I just had the privilege of speaking to Samaritan's Purse about a month ago down in Orlando. I love that organization. We personally give to it, because wherever there's difficulty, Samaritan's Purse shows up and helps people with their physical needs and also their spiritual needs.

You know, right now they're down in Mississippi and other places that have experienced these awful tornadoes. As soon as there's a problem, Samaritan's Purse is there. The difficulty that we experience in this world, gives people an opportunity to actually enhance their capacity to enjoy God later. It actually causes us to learn obedience through suffering. So, there are many good things that come out of evil. We can't unpack them all here on this program, but one of them is it forces us to consider what's really important in life. And it also prompts us to help others in their greatest period of need.

Another thing that happened this week, I want to tell you about it. A friend of mine was telling me that his adult daughter is a Christian who's dating a Jewish guy. But this Jewish guy said

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that he would convert to Christianity to marry her. Now, that seems to me to be an example of what people think about religion. They think religion is just a preference. It's a functional view of religion. In other words, if it works for you, you believe it. If it'll get me the girl, I'll believe whatever you want. Okay? It's not a true or false proposition, that this religion is true, and this religion is false, or this set of beliefs is true, and this set of beliefs is false. It's just functional. That's how people think. It would be really odd if I had a daughter, and she's a Christian, but she's dating a non-Christian. First of all, she shouldn't be doing that according to the Scriptures.

But if she's doing it, and the guy comes to me and says, hey, yeah, I'm willing to marry your daughter, or I'm willing to become a Christian to marry your daughter. I'd go, wait a minute. Do you really understand what Christianity is? It's not just a good idea. Okay? It's not just something you use as a means to an end. It's either true or its false. And if it's true, you ought to be a Christian because it's true. If it's false, you shouldn't be a Christian just to marry my daughter. You should learn what is true. And in fact, this isn't actually a Jewish mindset, but a secular mindset. An Orthodox Jew would never say I'm willing to convert to Christianity to marry somebody. An Orthodox Jew should be someone who would say, the only way I'm converting to Christianity is if Jesus really is the Messiah, if he really is God.

So, it seems to me that people today are much more interested in meology than theology. I'll just say or believe anything to get what I really want. This is just a form of idolatry, ladies and gentlemen. That's what it is. And our friend, Natasha Crain, who wrote the great little book, "Faithfully Different", expresses what the main secular mindset is. What's the main secular mindset? Four things she says. Listen to this, because I think she's spot on. I've mentioned this on the program before. In fact, we've had Natasha on.

Here's the four major beliefs of the secular mindset. Happiness is the ultimate goal. Number two, feelings are the ultimate guide. Number three, judgment is the ultimate sin. And number four, God is the ultimate guess. We don't know if God exists or not. But if he exists for you, great. You believe it, just don't impose those beliefs on me. That kind of thing. Now think about this. If happiness is the ultimate goal, and feelings are the ultimate guide, then judgment's the ultimate sin because you're not supposed to tell me I can't be happy. You're not supposed to tell me that I can't do something. If it makes me happy, that's the ultimate goal. And if God is the ultimate guess, then religion just becomes functional. Religion is just whatever is going to work for you, whatever is going to make your life better, whatever is going to help you achieve your goals.

Not that there is a God who created the universe, and sustains the universe, and created you, and sustains you, and literally added flesh to His deity, to come to earth and die a brutal death so you wouldn't be judged for the evil you've done. No, no, that's not the truth. The truth is whatever gets you where you want to go. You just do you. That's what people think about religion today. Anyway, it was just an observation. When my friend said that I go, that's really an odd way to think about Christianity. Oh, yeah, if it'll get me the girl, I'll believe it!

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By the way, Natasha Crain, is going to join me and Alisa Childers at Calvary Chapel, Chino Hills for our second Unshaken conference on May 6. If you want tickets, go to [UnshakenConference.com](http://UnshakenConference.com). Check it there. [UnshakenConference.com](http://UnshakenConference.com)., you'll see the issues we'll be covering there. It's all day Saturday. And then I'll be speaking with my friend and pastor, the great Jack Hibbs, who's the pastor of Calvary Chapel, Chino Hills, Lord willing, on May 7. But you have to get tickets to the Unshaken conference, May 6. Go to [UnshakenConference.com](http://UnshakenConference.com) in order to get those tickets. That is coming up on May 6.

I also want to point out that this weekend, I'm going to be in Pennsylvania at Calvary Chapel, Lebanon. That's going to be April 16, Sunday morning services. And Sunday night, we're doing "I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist" and taking questions Sunday night as well. So, check all that out on our website, [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org). And that'll be at Freedom Life Church in Christina, Pennsylvania, April 30. And then of course, we will be at Calvary Chapel, Chino Hills on May 6 and May 7.

Okay, another question has come in from Nikos, who says, "How would you reply to a government official who wrote me back saying this? 'Making a decision regarding abortion can be extremely difficult, and I believe that we must do all we can to support women to make an informed decision, taking into consideration all their options with medical professionals offering impartial advice.'"

Okay, here's my advice back. Abortion is not difficult, morally. It's difficult emotionally. Morally, that's a human being. We know that. There's no debate over it. Or there shouldn't be a debate over it. Because we know from a scientific perspective, that's a human being in the womb. There's a human being that has its own blood type, its own DNA, its own body. It's not the body of the mother. It's a body being formed in the body of the mother. It's got its own sex, its own biology. Obviously, it's a human being. It's not a squirrel. There's not a rabbit in there. There's not an aardvark in there. There's a human being in there.

And so, when a politician writes, this can be extremely difficult, yeah, it can be extremely difficult. But that doesn't mean there's not a right decision that needs to be made, and that is to protect the life of the human being in the womb. That's what we ought to be doing. I mean, you could take this same language, and turn it into or use another issue to realize or to illustrate how silly it is to say what this guy said. Making a decision regarding slavery can be extremely difficult, and I believe we must do all we can to support slave owners to make an informed decision, taking into consideration all their options with medical professionals offering impartial advice. How would that sound? It would be stupid.

It's a human being. Yes, it's emotionally hard. But you know what's even more emotionally hard? Killing your child and learning about it years later, and going, oh, I shouldn't have done that. That's more emotionally hard. It'd be much better if you don't want the child, to give the child up for adoption. There's twice as many people wanting to adopt children, as there are people giving children up for adoption. So, the child would have a home.

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And with that, Jim from West Virginia writes in and says, "Frank, I really enjoy your show. Thanks for all you do. I had a thought about those who make the claim that abortion should be legal because it is the woman's body. What about a surrogate mother?" He writes, "If a fertilized egg is placed into her womb, whose body is it? Who would have the right to abort a child in this scenario? Just a thought that may help those who see the baby as the woman's body."

Yes, good insight, Jim. In fact, it's been said this way. Let's just use different ethnic groups. If you take a white fertilized ovum, and implant that white ovum, fertilized ovum, into a black woman, a black mother, a black surrogate mother, what kind of baby are you going to have? A black baby or a white baby? You're going to have a white baby. Why? Because the body of the baby is white, the white fertilized ovum. Likewise, if you take a black fertilized ovum and put it in a white mother, you're going to have a black baby. Because the baby has its own body. The baby has its own DNA. The baby has its own blood type. The baby has its own sex. So, yes. It's not the body of the mother, it's the body of the baby.

And of course, a mother has the right to do what she wants within limits to her body, but not if she kills another body in the process. Now, if any of you think that there's not a human being in the womb, I double dog dare you to go to CaseForLife.com, and watch the one minute and seven second video on that homepage. One minute and seven second video on that homepage, CaseForLife.com. It's the website of my friend, Scott Klusendorf, who actually teaches an online course for us at OnlineChristianCourses.com. And if you take a look at that video, I think you're going to realize without any doubt, there is a human being with its own body in the womb of a mother.

All right. Finally, Shawn writes in and says, "Jeremiah 29:11-12 isn't written to the Church, I get it. So, how do you make application of it? You do not seem to explain that part in your talks." Okay, well, when I'm pointing out how to interpret the Bible, Shawn, just in a fleeting manner, I'm not going to go into all the details of a particular passage. Just pointing out, that whenever you come across a passage, you ought to stop. That's the acronym. It's part of our course how to interpret the Bible, S.T.O.P.

S stands for what's the situation? T stands for what type of literature is it? O stands for who's the object of the passage? And P stands for, is this prescriptive or descriptive? And when you look at Jeremiah 29:11, the situation is, this is a letter written to the exiles that went to Babylon in 586 BC. And it's a letter from God through Jeremiah. The type of literature is prophecy. The object is the people that went to Babylon, not 21st century Christians. And the P, is this prescriptive or descriptive? It's prescriptive for the people that went to Babylon. It's descriptive for the rest of us, because we're not the ones to whom this letter is written.

So, he says, how does this apply to us? Well, it applies to us because it shows us the character of God, that He's going to take care of His people, number one. At least He did here in the Old Testament, and that He was going to bring them back to the land. Secondly, it also shows you

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how God got the promised people in the promised land to bring forth the promised Messiah. Because you know, the Old Testament is really just tracing the bloodline of the Messiah, from all the way from Adam, eventually landing at Jesus. It's tracing that one bloodline. It's really the story of how the Messiah gets to us. And so, that is applicable knowledge for us, even if they aren't promises to us.

See, it applies to our life in the sense that it tells us something about God and how He works. But it's not a promise to us when He says, I'm going to promise these exiles seven years from now to actually prosper them back in Judah, after they are brought back there, after I bring them back here. Just like it's not a promise to us when He tells the exiles that went to Egypt in Jeremiah 44:11 that He's going to destroy them. Thankfully, that's not a problem to us. Nobody claims that. You don't see that stitched into a pillow. You don't see that on a poster. You don't see that on a coffee mug. I will destroy you and all Judah. You don't see that on a birthday card. That's so sweet, Grandma. Thank you so much. No, we've got to stop taking stuff out of context.

And then he goes on. Shawn says, "Also, prosperity Scriptures in the Old Testament aren't written to 21st century Christians, great. Yet I'm nearly certain sir, you are prosperous. You aren't living in a ghetto in inefficiency eating ramen noodles, are you? No, I'm not. But what you're doing here, Shawn, is you're assuming that God has promised prosperity to all Christians, and He hasn't. Just because some Christians are prosperous, and just about all of us living in America are compared to the world, doesn't mean that God has promised every Christian prosperity. What I'm saying here is the Old Testament, is not a promise to Christians.

Or let me put it another way, not the Old Testament. The Old Covenant is not a promise to Christians. We have a new and better covenant, according to the writer of Hebrews. The writer of Hebrews says the Old Covenant is obsolete, Hebrews 13:8. So, when you go to Malachi 3 and it says, bring your tithe to the temple and your barns will overflow. That's an Old Covenant promise. It's not a promise to us today. Now, I'm not saying that God might not do that for you. God still may prosper you, but it's not a promise. That's all I'm saying. In fact, God says that all good things come from Him. In fact, in 1 Timothy 6, Paul says that God gives us all things richly to enjoy. Yes, I'm admitting that any prosperity I have comes from God. It comes from His grace.

But it's not a promise. He doesn't promise all financial prosperity or good health. And the problem with the prosperity gospel people, is they take promises from the Old Covenant, and try and make them promises in the New Covenant, and that's illegitimate. Now, there's a lot in the Old Testament that is applicable to us and is instructive to us. For example, the whole book of Proverbs. Those are not promises, by the way. They are probabilities. Live your life this way, and chances are, it's going to turn out better for you than if you don't. Of course, many of the Psalms. The Psalms are prayers, most of them. Most of the Bible is God talking to us. Psalms are us talking to God. And there are several passages in the Old Testament that are repeated in the New Testament, and they are binding on us like, thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not covet.

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But one thing that does not appear to be taught very much in Christian circles is the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. We need to start teaching people about that because it can lead people down the wrong road. In fact, I was at a high school this week. A young girl came up to me. She's about to go to college. She said, "How can I make sure that I don't fall into the prosperity gospel?" When she's going to college, she's worried about getting involved in the prosperity gospel. I said, that's very astute of you, because a lot of people have a belief in God, that isn't the true God. When this false God doesn't promise what you think He ought to promise, unfortunately, some people will go, oh, God doesn't exist then. No, the God you invented in your mind doesn't exist. The true God exists, and He never promised you prosperity. He may give it to you out of His grace, but He didn't promise it to you. And to whom much is given, much will be required, by the way. That principle is a scary principle. Because we Christians, especially in America, we've been given a lot.

Alright, one more question. It says, "I recently stumbled across one of your videos where you were debating Michael Shermer. In the Q&A, one of the audience members asked you about morality, and you pointed out the distinction between moral epistemology and moral ontology. And you also showed a slide with a graph indicating the order of the disciplines." And he's asking me, where did I get that graph? You can get the book by Thomas Howe called "Objectivity in Biblical Interpretation." It's a real thick tome. Thomas Howe is a professor here at Southern Evangelical Seminary, SES.edu.

By the way, those of you that want to go to seminary, that's where you go. And if you want to apply for a scholarship, just go to SES.edu/Frank. Now, let me make a point about the difference between ontology and epistemology. And this is what so many atheists, in particular, confuse. When you say that you can't justify right and wrong without God, they'll say stuff like, are you telling me I can't be a good person? Are you telling me I don't know right from wrong? No, I'm not telling you that. That's not my argument. My argument is not that you can't do good things. My argument is not that you don't know good things, or you don't know right from wrong. My argument is that you can't justify what good things are unless God exists. You can't justify what morality is, without God existing. And that's important.

This is the difference between ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the study of the thing that you're trying to explain. What is ultimate being? Why does the moral law exist? Epistemology is how you know the moral law exists. How do you know right from wrong? Those are two different things. And atheists often confuse how they know right and wrong, with right and wrong itself, this moral standard. Let me give you an illustration. Maybe this will communicate it better than how I'm trying to explain it. Suppose you're driving down the highway, and you see a sign. It says speed limit 55. You can know what that sign means, and deny there's a traffic authority, deny there's cops, deny there's a government. You can read it. It says 55 miles an hour. That's epistemology. You can just look at it and go, yep, 55 miles an hour. But there would be no sign on that road, unless there was a traffic authority, unless there was a government, unless there were police officers.

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You see, knowing it is epistemology. That it exists, is ontology. You can know the speed limit and deny there's a traffic authority. There just would be no speed limit to know unless there was a traffic authority. Do you see what I'm saying here? Knowing it is one thing, explaining why it exists to begin with is another. When we're making the case with atheists, I'm not arguing over epistemology. You can know right and wrong in several different ways. Because God has written it on your heart, because you read it in the Bible, because your society had it right and was teaching it to you rightly, your grandmother told you, whatever. That's epistemology.

But that murder is wrong, that's only really wrong if a moral standard outside of ourselves that we're obligated to obey exists, and that is God's nature. If God doesn't exist, everything's a matter of opinion. There's no right and wrong. There are no rights. Everything's just a matter of opinion. And we know in our hearts, that's not true. Murder is not a matter of opinion. It's not just a matter of opinion that you can go into a school and shoot nine year olds. That's really wrong. That's really wrong. Something must be really right that we're obligated to obey. And that is God's nature, ladies and gentlemen.

All right, check out our website, [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org). Also check our calendar. We're going to be at several places in the coming months, including tonight. I'm at Louisiana Tech University. If you're anywhere in Louisiana, you can come by. You can also see it on our YouTube channel streaming. And then I will be at Calvary Chapel, Lebanon, Pennsylvania this weekend. In a couple of weekends, I'll be in another Freedom Life Church in Christiana, Pennsylvania. Then I'll be out with the great Jack Hibbs along with Alisa Childers and Natasha Crain at Calvary Chapel, Chino Hills for the Unshaken conference, May 6, and the morning service May 7. Great being with you. See you next time.

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