

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

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

How to Teach Apologetics to the Next Generation | with Brett Kunkle

(August 15, 2023)

FRANK:

Welcome to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, ladies and gentlemen. How can you increase the chances that your child will not walk away from the faith when they get older? I'm glad you want to know the answer to that because we have someone here who can help you with it. His name is Brett Kunkel.

We're at the CrossExamined Instructor Academy in Albuquerque, New Mexico today. Brett just gave a great presentation on how to teach apologetics to the next generation. And Brett, you've been doing this for quite a while, your website Maventruth.com. Where do you start? How young do you start? How do you get these kids grounded in the truth?

BRETT:

Yeah, I think you start as soon as they're talking. I think we have to think discipleship, the discipleship of our kids. We've got to think long term. We've got to think investing in them at a very young age and being very intentional. So, here's an easy way that I think about it, that I thought about it as a youth pastor. I thought about it as a parent of five kids myself. Think of three distinct stages, because the mind is going to develop. And so, you're not going to do the same thing at each stage.

Those early stages, really, what you want to do is you want to teach the what. So, a young child is what classical educationists refer to as the grammar stage. This is the stage where you just want to pour truth into them. And you want to help them to know what it is we believe. Now, they're not going to understand it all. That's fine. But think of them as this vessel, this container, and you're just pouring truth into them. And they're going to hold that, and you're going to keep building on it.

So, for instance, like with our kids, when they were young, we had a children's catechism. The catechism is a great tool. It's a tool that the church has used for a long time. It's fallen out of favor, probably in a lot of modern evangelical churches. But a catechism, some people will object. I've heard people say to me, you know, like, Oh, that's a Catholic thing. Well, you know, let's stay away from the Catholic stuff.

No catechism, the Protestant church has used. And it's simply taking our theology and putting it in question and answer form. And so, you know, what is God or who is God? Why did he make you? These kinds of things. And children as young as two, three years old can learn those things. And we've done this. We've done this with our own kids. And we've done this with Sunday School at our home church with two and three year olds teaching catechism. And so,

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they're learning about the nature of God. They're learning an answer about the Trinity, Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

Do they understand it? No, that's okay. But we're pouring that truth so that they get the what. They get a foundation. And of course, as they get older, they're going to start to understand more. But then what you're going to do is when they get into about middle school, or it could be fourth, fifth grade, middle school, the mind starts to grow. They start to be able to think abstractly. And that's where kids start to ask the why questions. And this is where sometimes we as parents, we get a little annoyed because we think they're questioning our authority, which sometimes they are.

But oftentimes, their mind is just developing and they want to know, not just the what, but they want to know why. They're looking for reasons. And so, we want to capitalize on this. Classical education calls this the logic stage. So, we want to teach them how to think. We want to give them reasons why. This is where apologetic training (so teach the why is the second stage), apologetic training has to be added. And so, you start teaching them the why. So okay, here's the what. All right. Now why do we believe this stuff? Here's good apologetics.

So, you add that. You don't stop teaching the what, but you keep teaching the what. Add the why. And then the third stage, which is typically high school, I think you've got to teach the how to. And this is where we get them out from behind the four walls of our homes, the four walls of our churches, we get all that training and teaching out of the classroom and into real life situations. So, they can see this stuff play itself out. And there's so many things that this does.

And we love that person, even though we disagree. And so, then we pray for them. I mean, just get to model the whole Christian life. And that's where it comes together so much. The what, the why, and then the how to brings it all together. And so, I think that's a kind of simple three stage process of training our young people so that they know what they believe, they know why they believe it, and they know why it matters.

Number one, it gives us a chance to model for them what it looks like to faithfully follow Christ, to engage in our greatest mission, which is the Great Commission. They get to see what it looks like to talk to non-believers, have gracious and yet intelligent conversation with unbelievers. They get to incorporate other spiritual disciplines like, after engaging with someone, praying for that person, talking about how they're made in God's image.

FRANK:

And how to actually express it is how to?

BRETT:

Yeah, and you know, I think that's a missing part of our training. Because we will keep them in youth group, or they're in our homes, or they're in church. But it's always with other believers. It's always kind of in the safety of the church. And so, there's this missing piece. They miss

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learning how to articulate it for themselves. So, this is why we have developed the immersive experience program. We put a ton of effort, and time, and money in developing the immersive experience program at Maven because we see kids come to life. Their faith comes to life on these trips.

So, we've got a trip that's focused on theology and Scripture. We want kids to know what they believe. And so, what we do is we give them the training, they read the books. But then we put together a custom trip for the youth group or the Christian school, and we take them to Salt Lake City, Utah. And basically, we put them in situations where they have to engage with Mormons. And now, what they're forced to do, is they're forced to articulate what it is that they studied. And that does a couple of things.

Number one, it shows them how, maybe that they don't know as much as they thought they did. It wasn't enough just to read it in the book or take the test. Now they've got to articulate it, and they're realizing oh, okay, I'm not sure how to articulate this. Okay, so I don't really know it that well. And then secondly, that's motivating for a kid. Because when they see their own insufficiency in articulating their faith, what do they do? They're motivated to go back and study. And now it's no longer me saying, hey, read this theology book. They're saying, hey, where's that theology book? I need to look at it. I need to read it because I know the next day we're going to go out and we're going to talk to Mormons.

FRANK:

Otherwise, I'm going to look stupid. And I don't want to feel stupid and inadequate. So, I need that. Tell it to me.

BRETT:

And that is incredible motivation. So, we've had kids, high school kids, and even some middle school kids who've gone on these trips where they get beat up by a Mormon. And I think this may be a great tool to motivate our kids. Let them get beat up by a Mormon. And they come back...

FRANK:

That's scary. [Laughter]

BRETT:

Yeah, for some of them it is. But there's a healthy fear there because that motivates them. They will come back, and they will study for two or three hours for the next day because they know they're going out the next day. And now there's this heightened awareness. Okay, here are the questions they're going to ask. Here's the things I couldn't articulate. I couldn't articulate the Trinity.

I couldn't articulate salvation by faith. I didn't know the Scripture references. So, they go and study those things. And we'll give them free time on these trips. And they'll go and study on their

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free time. And they'll stay up until midnight, one o'clock getting ready. And they're motivated. And so, it creates this internal motivation. It's not just mom, or dad, or youth pastor saying you need to do this externally. It's now the internal motivation is there.

FRANK:

And so, it isn't just applicable to the Mormon situation. You're giving these kids knowledge that they can use with other people as well. You just happen to be going to Salt Lake City. And there are some unique interactions they might have with Mormons. But you're still helping the young person to understand the truth of Christianity and how to articulate it to anyone.

BRETT:

Yeah, well, so for us, that trip is the first of three trips. And so, we really want a youth group or Christian school to go through all three, because the first one is really teach the what. So, here's our theology. We go through the doctrine of God, we go through the doctrine of salvation, we go through the Gospel. So, they're learning some of the basics of the Christian faith. And then the second trip is our apologetics immersive experience. And that's where we give them good apologetics and they have to watch six training videos that I teach. We have them read "I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist."

FRANK:

That's a good program. That's a really good program.

BRETT:

That's our textbook for them. That book is fantastic, because it gives a cumulative case, it's accessible. But it raises the bar for them as well. So, they do those two pieces of training. And then we give them tests, and quizzes, and things like that. And typically for the apologetic trip, we're looking for a university town. And so, we've done this in Flagstaff, Arizona where the University of Northern Arizona is at. We've done it in Boulder. We used to do it in Berkeley. You always would say oh Bizerkly. It is literally Bizerkly now. It's so dangerous.

FRANK:

You can't take them there anymore?

BRETT:

The Bay area is out of control. So, we're like, okay, we won't go there. There's plenty of other college towns we can go to. We find a college town and we set up a trip. And this is where then we invite atheists. We invite professors. We go onto the college campus. We talk to skeptical college students. With the Flagstaff trip, Sedona is next door. Sedona is a new age hub. So, they go talk to new agers. Yeah, they talk to all kinds of skeptics there with apologetic training. And now they're able to engage really anybody because we also give them some tactical training.

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You know, Greg Koukl, his masterful training. We give them that kind of training, so they know how to engage in a conversation. And then they're talking to all kinds of skeptics. And so, this is where we really equip them, to know why they believe it. And then the trips themselves, are getting it out of the classroom into real life, and they're learning to articulate it.

FRANK:

How many kids do you take on these trips? And if someone wanted to be a part of that, what do they do?

BRETT:

Two things on that. We do custom trips for individual groups. And so, we've taken college groups, we've taken youth groups, Christian schools, all kinds of groups. You've got to have a critical number. But we've taken groups as small as I think, eight. And we've taken groups as big as like 120. And they can go to MavenTruth.com and look for the information on immersive experiences there. And we will customize a trip for your group. And in fact, we have trained field guides who lead those trips. I think almost all of them have been through CIA.

FRANK:

Which is where we are sitting right now in Albuquerque, New Mexico at the CrossExamined Instructor Academy, which we do once a year, ladies and gentlemen. When you're listening to this, it's already happened. If you want to be a part of this, keep an eye out next summer, we'll have another CrossExamined Instructor Academy. So, these people that kind of chaperone and they train these young people, they come to training themselves.

BRETT:

Yeah, so we guide students through the whole experience. These are men and women who have the apologetic knowledge. But not just the apologetic knowledge. They have the interpersonal skills. They love students. They know how to relate to students. And they will guide you through that whole experience. Next summer in 2024, we have an open enrollment trip in July, and you can find the information on the website. But this is where we've just had so many parents who said, hey, I don't have a youth group, or my youth group won't do this trip, and I want to send my kid there.

So, we've got a trip where anyone in the US, you can send your kid to Utah, we'll help you with the training beforehand. And then we'll bring those students together. And we'll take them through this incredible experience.

FRANK:

MavenTruth.com, ladies and gentlemen. If you can't send your child on a trip, or your child is very young at this point, and this trip is not appropriate, there are still curricula you can get that will help your child learn the material. We have a couple at CrossExamined.org. If you go there and click on Store, you're going to see the 2nd - 5th grade curriculum. It's called "Yes, God is Real."

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to be an **ATHEIST**

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And then the 6th-8th grade curriculum is called "Let's Get Real." And then anything above 8th grade, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. So, we're trying to cover from 2nd grade on up. What other curriculum is out there that you know of? Go back to the catechism for a second. You talked about that. A question and answer kind of training for young people. What would you recommend Brett?

BRETT:

Well, Great Commission publishers put together, it's called First Catechism. And it's a reformed catechism. Now, I'm not personally reformed. But it's still a great catechism. We might delete some of those, you know, false ideas. [Laughter] But no, it's a great catechism for very young children. So, we've used it with our kids, starting really, I think, like three years old. And it's just easy to memorize for the kids.

And so, one thing we're doing at our church, I co-pastor a church in California with a buddy of mine. And we're taking our entire church through the New City Catechism that Tim Keller produced. And it's like 52 weeks. And we're taking not only the children, but also the adults through it. Because what we're finding is that the lack of knowledge is not just a problem amongst our young people. It's our adults as well. And so, we're going through that. So, I think those are two really good resources for churches to use in terms of curriculum.

FRANK:

We also have a course coming up in logic called Train Your Brain. Shanda Fulbright's going to teach that. I'll help her with that as well. That starts in October, ladies and gentlemen. It's for 6th-8th grade for the premium version. However, anybody can take the self-paced version. Brett, I always ask audiences a question. How many have ever taken a course in logic? I may get 5% of hands go up. And then I go, thank you, homeschoolers. It's only the homeschoolers who are taking logic, right?

BRETT:

I do the same thing with students, and it's a small minority and it's always the homeschoolers.

FRANK:

That's right. And so, even though this is written for 6th-8th graders, this new course in logic called Train Your Brain, it doesn't matter what age you are. You can take it if you haven't had a course in logic before. It will help you. We have to train young people how to think rather than what to feel. The public school system is teaching kids what to feel, where we need to teach them how to think.

BRETT:

That's right. That's one of the key ways we inoculate them against the false ideas of the culture. I mean, the culture wants to just import a worldview into them, but often through feelings and through the eyes, through the screen.

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FRANK:

The lust of the eyes.

BRETT:

Yeah. And so, we can inoculate them from that, from being taken captive by those ideas with good thinking. So, we're talking about the immersive experiences. You've got to take a big bite to invest in that or to find a group that's willing to do that. But that kind of stuff can be done in our homes and our local communities as well. In fact, when I was a youth pastor in Southern California, we do the same kind of thing. We take that same principle, and we would teach our middle schoolers.

Let's say we do a world religion series. We want them to be aware of these other ideas out there, and that these other ideas are false ideas. They're competing with the Christian faith. So, we would do a couple of weeks on Buddhism. And we'd start by teaching them what Buddhists believe. And then a second week on a biblical critique. How does this match up with Scripture? Then we do a third week on an apologetic critique. Here are the logical problems with Buddhist thought. Here are the historical problems. And then we would end that mini-series with a field trip to the local Buddhist temple.

And this is that whole idea, get it out of the classroom and into real life. And so, what I did is I just called up the local Buddhist temple. I said, hey, I've got 60 junior highers in my youth group here. We're teaching them about Buddhism. We'd love to bring them to the Buddhist temple and have one of your monks give them a tour and teach them more about Buddhism. Would you guys be willing to do that?

FRANK:

They're all over that.

BRETT:

Yeah, yeah, bring'em down! So, we brought them down and they got to interact with a real live Buddhist monk. They got to see the huge idols. But we did the training first. My philosophy has been truth first, before you expose them to the error. You want to inoculate them. So, we do that, then afterwards we debrief. And when we got this kind of training out of the classroom, we see kids light up. And so, we get these 60 junior highers out on the lawn in front of the Buddhist temple after having this whole experience. And man, you can't get them to shut up. And I don't just mean in general. I mean, that's always a problem. [Laughter]

They wouldn't shut up about Buddhism, about the Christian worldview, about truth, about apologetics. And they were just buzzing. But then here's the other aspect of it. We also then got to kind of wrap that up and say, okay, now what does the Christian worldview say about that Buddhist monk? Oh, he's an image bearer. Oh, he's made in the image of God.

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It doesn't matter what he believes. He still has intrinsic value. How do we treat him? We treat him with dignity and respect. And that's why we treat him the way we did when he was giving us a tour. We didn't mock him. We weren't arrogant towards him. And you know what, he's lost though. He's lost in his sin. And then we spent time with the junior highers praying for him, and helping them, and just living out the Christian worldview.

FRANK:

That's great. That's great.

BRETT:

And so, you can do that. So, whether it's a Buddhist temple, the Hindu temple. We would call up Mormon missionaries and have them come visit our youth group, or things like that. You've just got to get creative to get them engaged.

FRANK:

So, you would ask the kids then to bring your questions for the Mormon missionary?

BRETT:

Yeah. So, we do our training first, so they'd get an overview of Mormonism. And then we had the Mormon missionaries come to youth group and just do a big Q&A session. And they would always typically want to say, hey, can we do a little presentation? We're like, sure, yeah. And then we'd open it up and do an hour of Q&A and the kids were prepared. So, they're asking questions, and follow up questions, and they're engaging. And it just brings it all to life. And every time we do something like this, you just see kids light up.

FRANK:

Youth pastors, do you want to get beyond bands, Pepsi, and pizza? Nothing wrong with doing that. But if you really want to train your kids, so not only do they know Christianity, but they're eager to share it. Do an immersive experience, even if it's just local. You can call the local mosque if you have one, or Buddhist temple, or Mormon church, Jewish synagogue. How about a liberal church?

BRETT:

Well, we do that on the immersive experiences. We go find progressive churches and talk to progressive pastors and say, okay, you don't believe that Jesus is the only way. Why not? You're gay affirming, why? You can just start with a friend who's an unbeliever, who'd be willing to just come in and talk to your youth group and do a Q&A with them. I mean, that's an easy way to do it. But we've got to get kids engaged with the world. Now, of course, this requires, and this is, I think, a key part of discipleship with young people. They have to see us modeling this. They have to see us living it out.

FRANK:

Yeah.

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BRETT:

Most Christian kids have never seen a Christian adult share the Gospel or get into a conversation with an unbeliever. So, they are never seeing us do it. So, then when we teach them at church or at youth group, oh, you need to go share your faith, or you need to do this or that. They're like, well, I've never seen anyone do it. Or you say that we need to do this, but I don't see anyone in my church doing it. And so, it just has no impact.

FRANK:

Yeah, there's three levels. There's knowing something academically. There's teaching it, and then there's doing it. Right? Doing it yourself. That's the third level, that's the hardest level. And if you can get kids to actually do it, then they're going to internalize it. I mean, friends, imagine that you went to a school where they never required a test for the information that was given. You would not take that as seriously as if you knew there was not only a test, but an oral exam, where you needed to on your feet, engage with somebody to express that you knew the material. That's what this is about.

BRETT:

Yeah. Right. That's a great way. I think probably one of the biggest problems I find with Christian young people who grew up in the church, it's just apathy. They're so apathetic. And a part of it is because we've been giving them such a shallow dose of Christianity. And so, they think they know what they need to know.

FRANK:

Yeah, we're just against a bunch of stuff.

BRETT:

Yeah, and they just think, oh, I believe in God and that's good. And so, they have a shallow view of the faith. They've never really seen this kind of lived out. So, they just get really apathetic and really comfortable. When you put them in these kinds of situations, man, they can't be apathetic because they're going to get challenged. They're going to be shown right in front of their faces, oh, you don't know what you believe. You know?

And some people might be concerned, is this going to create doubt in my kid? Well, it might. But that doubt was going to come whether you exposed them to this or not. Because eventually they're going to leave your home, they're going to leave your church, they're going to leave your youth group, and they're going to get exposed to these ideas. And if they have a smartphone, they're being exposed to them anyway. And I think it's a much better strategy to expose them to doubt while they're with us.

Then we can help them walk through that, and we can train them and equip them, than when they're 1000 miles away from home on a college campus by themselves. Or they're working at

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the local supermarket, and they're by themselves, and the co-workers are kind of chipping away at them. A better strategy is to walk with them through those doubts. And if those doubts are going to come anyway, I want it to be when they're with me so I can help train them.

FRANK:

You've seen the short term effect of this, that kids really get engaged. They want to know the material; they want to share the material. They don't want to look dumb when they're out there interacting with people. That's why they're so motivated to know it. That's one reason. And so, that makes them stronger as Christians, stronger as ambassadors, stronger as witnesses, and stronger personally, in knowing what they believe and why they believe it. Have you been able to discover how these people have fared when they've grown up? Have they stayed in the church? Have you been able to track anybody?

BRETT:

Yeah, I have anecdotal. We haven't done a formal survey. But what was really cool this year is there's a young man who's a youth pastor in Southern California. He called us and said, hey, I want to do an immersive experience with my youth group. And he said by the way, I'm so and so. And when I was a high school student, I went on an immersive experience with Upland Christian Academy 10 years ago and it had a huge impact on me. Now I'm a youth pastor, and I want to take my kids on this.

Now, he got some pushback from his church because this is kind of a dangerous trip, right? So, we had parents who were concerned. But he kind of fought for it. And we helped him convince families of the church to send their kids on this trip. And they just went on their very first trip and had an incredible experience. And so, it was just great to see that come full circle, a kid who had been on one of these trips. Now he's in a position to lead kids and he's saying hey, we've got to do this trip.

We've seen some immediate effects. When kids come back then, especially if they go to Utah, then they start making trouble with their Mormon friends. But over the long term, yeah. I mean, there's a ton of kids who we've seen, this trip kind of changes their trajectory a little bit. And rather than the typical shallow evangelical faith, there's a hunger for more. And then they seek out the knowledge of God. They make apologetics a regular part of their discipleship. And now they're parents, they're working at churches, or they're working in different ministries.

And yeah. We've just seen how this really helps solidify their faith. Now, there's no guarantee. We've also seen those kids that will walk away. But in terms of strategy, this is more successful than just kind of a steady diet of the typical youth group.

FRANK:

It's easy to walk away from something you've doubted your whole life and didn't know very well anyway. It's harder to walk away from something you know beyond a reasonable doubt is true and have seen it and tasted it.

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BRETT:

Yeah. And some of the kids we've seen struggle. There's a little bit more of an opportunity for them to be honest about it, too. And for us to kind of say, hey, this isn't intellectual, is it? Because you know too much. You were on one of these trips. You got the training.

FRANK:

You want to just live a certain way now that does not comport with Christian ethics.

BRETT:

That's right. Yeah. And so, we'll see that moral doubt that they struggle with.

FRANK:

If Christianity were true, would you become a Christian? No. Okay. [Laughter] I don't want to give up X, Y, or Z, my girlfriend, my LGBTQ. I want to affirm my friends who are in that world. No, I am not interested. Yeah. Well, at least you know where they stand.

BRETT:

Yeah. And I've had some conversations with these kids, where then you're able to the heart of the matter pretty quickly. And they're not able to kind of throw up some intellectual smokes screen? Like, oh no, I struggle with this or that. It's like, you're able to confront them with their sin.

FRANK:

Alright, let's sum it up this way, Brett. MavenTruth.com. They can go there, and they can check into immersive experiences. Review again those two catechisms that you mentioned earlier.

BRETT:

First Catechism by Great Commission publishers, and then New City Catechism. And you can get those on any Christian book distributor, or any online retailer.

FRANK:

Start there friends. We also have curricula as I mentioned earlier. We have "Yes, God is Real" for 2nd-5th grade. We also have, "Let's Get Real", that's for 6th-8th grade, and I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist is another curriculum beyond that. And then we also have this logic course coming up in October, taught by Shanda Fulbright and myself called Train Your Brain. So, there are resources out there.

BRETT:

Let me throw one more out there. My wife, Erin and I do a podcast, the Maven parent podcast.

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FRANK:

Oh, good.

BRETT:

Where we've just seen, there's a need. There are so many parenting resources out there. And they're all overly pragmatic. They don't incorporate good Christian thinking or worldview. And so, a lot of our Christian parenting strategies are not effective. And so, what we've done in our podcast is we try to think carefully about the issues, the challenges. We'll cover the gender ideology stuff that kids are getting.

But we also say, hey, what does the Christian worldview tell us about discipline, the nature of discipline? Does a Christian worldview have anything to offer when I'm dealing with a picky eater? My three year old's a picky eater. Does my theology inform me on that? So, we try to offer some good Christian worldview, thinking on these things that then lead to practical steps. That the practical stuff flows out of our worldview, and we try to help coach and mentor parents to really raise their kids with a biblical worldview.

FRANK:

Name that podcast again.

BRETT:

It's the Maven Parent Podcast.

FRANK:

Maven Parent Podcast. Another podcast you need to avail yourselves of friends. Brett, as always, great being with you. Thanks for all the work you're doing. And everyone else out there, MavenTruth.com. Lord willing, see you here next week.

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