

Street Smarts: Using Questions to Answer Christianity's Toughest Challenges | with Greg Koukl

(August 18, 2023)

FRANK:

Welcome to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest today is the great, Greg Koukl, all the way from California. But actually, right now we're sitting across from one another, because we're in Albuquerque, New Mexico at the CrossExamined Instructor Academy. And we've got some brand new stuff that you're going to want to hear because Greg has a new book, right? What's the new book?

GREG:

Well, the new book is called "Street Smarts: Using Questions to Answer Christianity's Toughest Challenges." Now, if people are familiar with "Tactics", then the bells are going off because this is really an extension of Tactics. It's a sequel to Tactics. And it is meant to pick up where Tactics left off by addressing a number of issues: atheism, abortion, trouble with the Bible, sex, marriage, gender, science and Christianity, problem of evil, etc., that kind of thing. It's giving background to what is the issue, what's wrong with those issues, how to answer those challenges, but then packing them into the tactical game plan with sample dialogues and sample questions to launch people into productive conversations.

FRANK:

So, this really puts Tactics into particular apologetic situations.

GREG:

Exactly, exactly. So, we've had a number of requests, ironically, just recently, just when we were about to release the book that said, can you do more on this? Can you give us dialogues, how these tactics actually play out in specific situations with specific challenges. I said, well, that's what we've just done with Street Smarts.

FRANK:

So, friends, Street Smarts is going to come out in September. If you're hearing this before then, I want you to do something. I want you to go to Amazon or wherever you get books and preorder it. And the reason that's important is because pre-ordering actually drives it up on the charts before it comes out, which means more people see it on certain preorder lists. And then more people, therefore, will buy it. And it will help the success of the book. And this is a very important book, Greg. Because here at the CrossExamined Instructor Academy this morning, we've been talking about how difficult it is to try and defend some of the doctrines of Christianity in a culture that is so hostile to Christianity.



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GREG:

That's right. The things that we're facing now, some of them have been around for a long time. Jesus is the only way, for example. Very controversial, more controversial now than it ever has been. But now we're facing the kinds of things frankly, Frank, I don't know about you, but I did not ever expect to face the kinds of things that we're facing now. The genders and all that transgenderism, all of those issues ever since Obergefell in 2015, when same-sex marriage was made legal by the Supreme Court.

FRANK:

Imposed.

GREG:

Pardon me?

FRANK:

It was imposed.

GREG:

It was imposed. That's true.

FRANK:

Because you said long before that case, that same-sex marriage was never illegal. There was just no provision for it.

GREG:

There was no provision for it. There were no new liberties that were actually given with the Obergefell decision. People had the liberty to walk down the aisle and pledge their troth until death do them part, set up housekeeping, go on a honeymoon. I mean, there are whole industries that were given to this kind of thing. They had all of those liberties. What they did not have was the kind of social approbation that the Supreme Court gave them, where the Supreme Court essentially said, there is no difference between a man and a woman when it comes to these kinds of relationships.

Of course, we know common sense teaches there is a big difference. And there's a huge cultural difference between a male/female long-term monogamous relationship, marriage, and a male/male or a female/female long-term monogamous relationship, which they were allowed to have. Nobody restricted them. But what they didn't have is approval. They didn't have the culture, in a sense, being forced to say that you are the same as everyone else. When apart from the moral question, just on the cultural level, it's not the same.

Same-sex relationships do not function in the support and the health of our communities and of our culture the same way that, as I mentioned, long-term monogamous, heterosexual unions function. And this is precisely why by the governments and communities from the beginning of

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time, since we've had communities, have privileged them, and have restricted them, and regulated them. Because they do a particular thing that other relationships don't do. They produce the next generation. It is the foundation for culture. And culture cares about its own self-preservation. That's why they did special things for that unique relationship. There's no reason to add more people to it.

The Supreme Court did that. And what they did is essentially dedefined marriage. Because all marriage is, is a list of names. And by the way, as you know, there's no reason now not to increase the list in any given so-called marriage. So, we have two, or three, or four, or five and, you know, polyandry, and poly, whatever and whatever. Yeah, all of those kinds. What's to stop it? Because there is no standard at all, except for people wanting to call themselves married. And the Supreme Court has given that opportunity.

FRANK:

So, what are some of the tactics that you give in Street Smarts to deal with an issue like this? Let's say it's same-sex marriage or gender ideology. What's new about the Street Smarts approach that isn't in Tactics?

GREG:

Okay, so what Tactics does, the first treatment, the Tactics book lays out the game plan. And in the third step of the game plan, you are using questions. The game plan is all about questions, because questions keep you safe. When you're asking questions, you're not making claims. And if you're not making claims, there's no burden of proof on you. And you're showing an interest in the other person, and it's a relaxed environment, easy, shallow end of the pool. So, it's all dependent on questions. We're gathering types of information.

So, a massive portion of the chapters dealing with all these things is letting Christians know, here's the mistake. Here's the flaw. And these are things I've been dealing with for, you know, almost 50 years. My 50th anniversary as a Christian is coming up here in a couple of months. And I got in play very quickly. And I've had a lot of experience, just like you have at universities all over the world, in engaging people in conversations. And so, I've had to figure out what's wrong with these things in order for me to tactically be able to answer the challenges. That's one thing you have to have. You've got to know what's wrong.

But the third step of the Columbo tactic is what I call it, the game plan, is to use questions to make a point. And in particular, what Street Smarts does, is we use questions to expose a weakness or a flaw in somebody else's view, or use questions in a very creative way to deflect a challenge to Christianity, okay? So, what I have here that's new, the concept is there in the old book. And there's a couple illustrations. What I've done here is give kind of a basic apologetics book, because you can't show a weakness or a flaw in somebody else's view: atheism, answering the problem of evil, dealing with a lot of these new challenges, people object to issues in the Bible. They think science and faith are irreconcilable. You can't deflect those things unless you know what's wrong with them.

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And so, I spent lots and lots of time setting that out. Now you have a clear idea of the flaw. How do we leverage our understanding of the flaw into a conversation with someone else? Quick example, problem of evil. Okay, this is a perennial problem, one of the biggest challenges to Christianity because if it goes through the way people think it goes through, it's a defeater for Christianity, because there's an apparent contradiction. Now, in Street Smarts, I do not deal with why God allowed evil or how to defeat the contradiction. There's not a contradiction if you understand the Christian worldview. This is part of our story. Okay. And our story is not over yet. It all works in.

But two things I do address is I say, first of all, this is not a Christian problem. This is a human problem. The problem of evil, it doesn't matter where you live, or when you lived. Everybody knows something's wrong with the world. And so, every worldview has to address this problem. Now, the atheist thinks that if he can challenge Christians with the problem of evil, that it gets him off the hook.

FRANK:

But he can't, and we're going to pick it up right after the break. And Street Smarts is the place you can get answers to these issues, whether it's the problem of evil, whether it's science, whether it's the gender issues, same-sex marriage. We're going to talk more about it with my guest today, Greg Koukl with Stand to Reason. Checkout Street Smarts wherever you get books. Preorder it today. We're back in two.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest today is the great Greg Koukl. And if you're listening to this on the American Family Radio Network, you need to know that we have two podcasts. This is the one you hear on the radio. But there's one midweek that is not broadcast on the American Family Radio Network. It drops on Tuesday. So, just look for I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, the podcast, and you can find the midweek program. And we'll have several guests over the next several weeks, that you're going to want to hear on the midweek podcast. Back to my guest today.

GREG:

I think STR has a one-hour show too on AFR, and I think it follows yours. I'm not sure how the schedule goes.

FRANK:

Is that on the weekends?

GREG:

It's on the weekends.

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FRANK:

On the weekends. So, you've got Stand to Reason as well, STR.org. My guest today, Greg Koukl. Greg, before the break, we were talking about the problem of evil. Unpack this problem and how to deal with it in Street Smarts. Pick up the conversation.

GREG:

What I said is, I tried to make two points. This is what I'm after in my conversation. I'm not taking on the whole issue. I want to get them thinking. I want to, as I put it in the books, put a stone in their shoe. I'm not trying to close the deal. I just want to get them thinking. And one thing I know, and a lot of people don't realize this. The problem of evil is everyone's problem, not just the Christian's problem. And so, when I approach it, I'm looking at it from a perspective of a human being first, not as a Christian apologist.

What is the best explanation, given the fact of the problem of evil in the world? And so, that means it's also on the atheist to explain the problem of evil. So, my first question, if they offer it, is to get clarification. What do you mean? What exactly is the problem? And then they're going to explain it. So, you believe there really is evil in the world? Of course, I do. That's why I don't believe in God. Okay, well, I have another question for you. You think that evil is evidence against God? Yes, I do.

Okay, so, now that God is gone. Let's just say there was no God. Do the things that you called evil still happen in the world? Yeah, I'm sure they do. And they're still evil? Yeah, of course they're evil. Okay, help me to understand, how does atheism explain the problem of evil?

FRANK:

Tough luck.

GREG:

Yeah, well, tough luck. Yeah. They can't even call it evil because an atheist is a person who's a materialist, or generally. But certainly, they don't believe in anyone out there who's setting a standard. Now keep in mind what the objection is. How can there be so much evil in the world? People aren't talking about; how can things happen that I don't like? That's relativism. They're talking about things that shouldn't be the way they are. That ain't right. You know?

And so, if that ain't right, that means it's broken some rule that applies to everyone. They shouldn't have done that. Okay, so then my next question is going to go in that direction. I don't know what he's going to say when I ask him, how do you explain it? I know that there's not going to be an explanation. He can't call those things evil on his worldview. That's my knowledge here. And my questions are going to move in that direction. That's one part of my approach.

The second part is, is the idea that if he's going to call something evil, it can only be evil in virtue of violating some kind of standard. As Lewis has said, you don't call something crooked, unless

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you have an idea of what straight is. So, I'm going to ask him about that. So, you think when you say they're evil, that they did something wrong? Yes, of course. So, they broke a rule. Would that be fair to say? Like a moral rule? Yeah, they did what they're not supposed to do.

So, my response is, who's supposer? Where are you getting your standard, moral standard, that you are judging evil in the world by? Now, there's the introduction to the conversation. Now, I have the dialogue in the book, just like that. And there's a couple other lines in there. But it's meant to get Christians going. Here's what's wrong. Here's the kinds of questions you can use to kind of launch the issue, and then you just kind of follow the conversation. But you know what you're trying to accomplish. And, you know, sometimes people are just going to be stumped. Because a lot of these issues, with the questions you ask that are legitimate, they're not trying to make them look dumb, or foolish, or trap them in an illicit way.

But an atheist is making a statement when he says there's so much evil in the world. How could God allow that? That he is not allowed to make as an atheist, because there's no standard for evil in the atheist's world. So, I'm pitting his worldview against mine. In my worldview, the problem of evil make sense, because we have a lawmaker, and we acknowledge that people break those laws, and there are going to be consequences to it.

Why would He allow that to happen? Well, He knows that better than we do. But if there is potentially some good reason He would allow evil for a season, then it's not a contradiction. That's the basic response to that issue. I don't go into detail there. The most important thing I want to show, is that the atheist is making a complaint himself, that he can't answer, and I can.

FRANK:

Yeah, he's stealing a standard from God while he's arguing there is no God.

GREG:

That's right. And he is acknowledging, implicitly that there is a standard over everyone, which can only be the case, if there is someone to impose the standard in some way. A transcendent standard, a transcendent God. So, the cash out for this is Frank, ironically, that the problem of evil is not a good argument against God. It's a good argument for God, the moral argument for God, and against atheism. It's atheism's fatal flaw. That's the name of the chapter.

FRANK:

Geisler used to say that evil doesn't disprove God. It may prove there's a devil out there. But it doesn't disprove God because there'd be no such thing as evil unless there was good. And there would be no such thing as good unless God existed. So, this appeal to a standard is a tactic that is very effective on so many different fronts. Do you use that same standard on the same-sex marriage or gender issue? What standard are you appealing to in order to say this is a good thing?

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GREG:

Yeah, I think that's a legitimate way to go. It just depends on the conversation. That issue is so emotionally traded. And today, in your presentation you gave this thing. What do you call that thing?

FRANK:

The Overton Window.

GREG:

The Overton Window, in the way culture looks at things now. Our view is way at the extreme. And so, you've got really intense feelings about that. What I try to do in that case, is I try to leverage their sensibilities regarding that. In other words, what drives them morally, so to speak, to defend that? Before I say that, I just want to mention a point here as an aside, no extra charge. When people ask you for your preferred pronouns, don't give the pronouns that match your sex, because you're then saying, these are the pronouns I prefer. I just happen to be cisgender. So, I prefer he and him because I'm a male. But now you're playing into the narrative.

Instead respond, I don't have a preferred pronoun. I have a sex. I'm male, for example, or female. And that's a way to kind of state that. And now you're kind of taking a stand. You're planting a flag a little bit. But they've asked you for what your view is, and that's their ethic. Their ethic is, we should let people be themselves. And so, you're saying I'm myself.

FRANK:

Except you, Mr. Christian. You can't be yourself.

GREG:

Well, that's the way it plays out. It's a one way street. But here's how I'm going to play that out in a conversation situation. The pushback is, we don't want to use preferred pronouns with other people, especially if they don't match their gender or if they don't match their sex, or any sex. That's all crazy stuff. Oh, gender is flexible. No, it's not. Your imagination is flexible. Gender is not flexible. You don't get assigned. Pardon the reference here. No doctor assigns a penis or a vagina. That's part of the basic equipment. It's the structure of reality.

But we're getting pushed to go along with a narrative that is against our views. But it isn't just against our views. It's against the structure of reality. It's foolishness. And it's not good for the people who are pursuing this individually, gender dysphoric people. But why do we have to do that? Because we have to be nice. People should be authentic. You know, you do you is their idea. So, if this is what they believe about themselves, we need to support what they personally believe to be their authentic self.

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FRANK:

My authentic self is to not say what my pronouns are. My authentic self is to tell you, you can see I'm a man. That's my authentic self. My authentic self is to say you're a sinner. I've got to be myself, Greg. [Laughter]

GREG:

Okay, so now you're making the proper point. But that's not tactically shrewd because now you're making a statement that is liable to get a gainsay response. Somebody's going to disagree and then bang, bang, bang, disagreeing. So, if we use the tactical approach, in Streets Smarts, we're going to use questions then employ what you just said. That's the understanding we have. So, I'm going to say to somebody in this situation: do you think people ought to be authentic to their own views? Of course, we do. That's why I'm in favor of supporting these people who are trying to be authentic to themselves.

Okay, so, I have another question for you, if you don't mind. And that is, when a Christian says one thing, but he does another. He says he believes this. This is his conviction, but he lives a totally different way.

FRANK:

Hypocrite.

GREG:

That's a hypocrite. Okay, that's a hypocrite. Is being a hypocrite wrong? Yes, it is. Now notice, I'm setting this up. You know where I'm going right? To the viewers, I'm setting him up. He's putting all this stuff on the table. He's not going to be able to take it back because he put it there in response to my questions. And then I said, Okay, now final question. Why are you asking me or demanding, pressuring me to be inauthentic to my own convictions, and essentially asking me to be a hypocrite? Okay, there's a question. Now, what happens now? The ball just went in his court, and it's his turn. Pressure's off me. It was all questions. But I was able to make the point with questions. Now he's got to respond.

FRANK:

You shouldn't be a bigot. I don't care if you want to be a bigot. You shouldn't be a bigot.

GREG:

What's a bigot?

FRANK:

Exactly, that's what you need to ask.

GREG:

Okay. See, that's our first Colombo question. What do you mean by that? Why would you say that I'm bigoted?

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FRANK:

Because you don't agree with me?

GREG:

Yeah. Are you saying that a bigot is somebody who doesn't agree with somebody else?

FRANK:

Yeah, that's what I'm saying.

GREG:

Do you agree with me?

FRANK:

No.

GREG:

Then that would make you a bigot?

FRANK:

That's different. I'm right. You're wrong.

GREG:

Ironically, that's exactly the comment that I've gotten from people. The reason I'm not a bigot or intolerant is because I'm actually right, they said. But it just goes to show that these kinds of conversations, there's no magic bullet here. There's no silver bullets.

FRANK:

As you've said before, conversations are messy. They're not tidy.

GREG:

What we're doing is to try to rise to the occasion. The rising is more difficult than it ever has been because the issues are more complex. And Christians aren't out in the street. And the reason that they're not in the street, so to speak. And the street, by the way, is wherever you feel uncomfortable and wherever you feel challenged. Wherever things are difficult, you go, well, I'm not going there. That could be your office. It could be a school. It could be your family, when you get into certain discussions. Because they don't know the answers. They don't know how to do that. And they know this is challenging and messy. And that's what the book *Street Smarts* is helping them to do.

FRANK:

And we've got a lot more to talk with Greg about. How do you deal with the science and faith issue? What about that? How about problems in the Bible? We're going to get to it today in this

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episode of I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest, Greg Koukl of Stand to Reason, his new book, Street Smarts. It goes further than Tactics. That's why you need to get it. Preorder it now. Back in two.

Do you know how to deal with atheists? Do you know how to answer their concerns when it comes to science, morality, evil, the Bible? One book you can get on that is actually Street Smarts. We're talking to Greg Koukl about it. But also, you can join a course that begins on August 14. I'll be your instructor. It's called "Stealing from God: Why Atheists Need God to Make Their Case." If you take the premium version, you're going to be with me on six occasions for live Q&A Zoom sessions, where we can learn from one another, and you can ask any question you want. So, go to CrossExamined.org. Click on online courses. You will see it there.

Now, Greg, we were talking before the break about the value of knowing this material so you can be very good on the street. I want to bring up another objection that we hear all the time. You Christians are basically just committing the God of the Gaps fallacy whenever you say that God created the universe, or God designed life, or any other kind of issue that relates to science. Science is one day going to get rid of the need for God completely. We've already seen it in the past. We used to say that God created thunder and lightning directly and all that. We know that isn't the case. How do you respond?

GREG:

The gods were bowling. So, my question is going to be right out of the gates, what exactly is the God of the Gaps fallacy? Now, I know that. And they have something in their mind, but I want them to put it out on the table. I want to get the challenges as clear as possible. People who've read Tactics know this is the first step in the game plan. Street Smarts is the third step. So, that's what I expand on in this book. But we've got to start with the beginning of the game plan because that's going to give us the most safety, and the most information to know how to move forward.

So, when I ask him, what's the God of the Gaps fallacy? How do you understand it? He said, when you find something that science can't explain, and you just stick God in there and you say, God did it. And then I say, that's what you think we're doing? Oh, okay. Well, you're misunderstanding a few things. But let me ask you a question about your confidence that you just expressed. Did I hear you right, that you said, these are things that science will be able to answer? Yes. Okay. So, you're acknowledging that there is a gap of information? Yes. And we don't have an answer.

FRANK:

Like even Richard Dawkins said, we don't know who created the universe or what created the universe. But give science more time. We'll figure it out.

GREG:

Okay, so thank you. So, you don't know, and science doesn't know?

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FRANK:

Not yet. But we will with the advance of science.

GREG:

Okay. I'm just curious. How is this not an example of science of the gaps?

FRANK:

Well, we've seen the progress of science in the past. So, it's a logical inference that this will continue to the point that science is one day going to be able to explain everything.

GREG:

It's a logical inference because they've explained something.

FRANK:

Yes.

GREG:

Why do you think they will be able to explain everything?

FRANK:

I just have the confidence.

GREG:

Okay, good. So, this is an example of pushing science into the gap.

FRANK:

Yeah, because of previous experience, though. It's not blind faith here. It may be some faith, but it's not blind faith.

GREG:

Okay. So, the next thing. Do you think that's what I'm doing?

FRANK:

I think that's what you're doing. You're putting God in the gaps.

GREG:

So, in other words, you don't think I have a reason for asserting God in a certain circumstance?

FRANK:

Well, what reason do you think God created the universe? Why couldn't a multiverse be responsible?

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GREG:

Well, the multiverse is a different issue. I have questions about that, that I could ask you. I just want to stay on this one topic for a moment. Okay? So, let me just ask you a few questions on this so-called God of the Gaps. So, you think things exist? I'm just going to ask some simple questions.

FRANK:

Yes, of course.

GREG:

Easy. Okay. The things that exist, have they always existed? Is the universe eternal?

FRANK:

Some say it is.

GREG:

Well, what do you think?

FRANK:

Well, the best scientific evidence we have now is no. It had a beginning.

GREG:

So, the universe came into existence at some time in the past. It's got an age. Okay. I'm with you. I agree with all of that. Okay. Here's the question that I have for you now. What caused the universe to come into existence?

FRANK:

We don't know.

GREG:

Well, you only have two options. Either something or nothing. Something did, or nothing did. Now, if you say we don't know what caused it, that sounds to me like something did, but we don't know what it was. Is that right?

FRANK:

It could be, but we don't know. We don't have enough information to say it was God at this point. Why would you say it was God?

GREG:

So, I'm not saying it's God right now. But I'm just working with two basic categories. If you say we don't know what caused it, that sounds like you mean something caused it. The only other

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alternative is saying nothing caused it. No cause, no purpose, no reason. So, what do you think are the odds?

FRANK:

Some have suggested nothing, like Lawrence Krauss.

GREG:

Okay, well...

FRANK:

But of course, to be fair about that, his nothing isn't really nothing.

GREG:

That's right. That should be my line. Thank you. That's why I will sometimes say, some thing caused it, or no thing caused it. Because in the case of Krauss with a lot of people, they use nothing as a kind of something. And it turns out to be a kind of something. You know, the quantum right vacuum or something like that. But there's the ultimate cause where whatever it is that exists that caused other things where that came into being. I'm just zeroing in on this, Frank. You're saying that the universe came into existence. All I'm asking, two categories, Law of Excluded Middle. Law of Non-Contradiction. It can't be both. It can't be neither. Okay, so you're the reasonable guy. Do you think no thing caused it? That no thing is responsible or that something is responsible?

FRANK:

Well, it must be something. But we don't know what that something is. So, I'm going to remain agnostic at this point.

GREG:

Okay, well, that's fair. But you've already said quite a bit, that you know when you say something. Because now it's got to be something outside of the natural universe, right?

FRANK:

Well, we can't get behind Planck time.

GREG:

No, no, no. I'm just saying, whatever Planck time is, I thought we just agreed that all of that stuff, quantum vacuum, Planck time, all this stuff, there was when it wasn't. There was when it wasn't. So, at some time in the past, time T zero, all of this came into being. My question is, what caused Planck time, quantum vacuum, atoms, all that other stuff. What caused that? Now, you said something. Okay, good. But then, that would have to be something outside of the natural universe.

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FRANK:

So, why would you say it's God, though? What is the evidence for God? Not just to say, well, we don't have a natural explanation. Why do you say it's the God of the Bible?

GREG:

Frank, well, you've asked two different questions. One of those is why is it God? Or why is it the God of the Bible? I just want to stick with one thing at a time here. And we've already established one of the reasons. Okay? You said some thing outside of the natural whatever. Something outside of the material universe caused it. Okay, well, if it's something that caused it, it can't be material. Because what it caused is the material universe. Fair enough?

FRANK:

Right.

GREG:

Okay. And that something is non-material, and it has to be pretty powerful, pretty smart. It would have to be some thing that could initiate a cause. That means it has to have a will. Okay. Now, I don't know about you, but this is beginning to sound a lot like the God that I believe in. Okay, so let's stop this one right here, because we can go to some other things. But it's enough to give people an idea of how this back and forth works. And what I have in my mind is a clear idea of where I want to go.

Now, most Christians don't have that. That's what the book gives them. But I have more than that in my mind. Not just a clear idea of where I want to go. But questions that will elicit affirmations from the objector that become pieces of my case, that leads to an end. I mean, I'm surprised, even in our little roleplay here. When you say we don't know what caused it, well, that is an admission that something caused it. You're not going for the no thing option. You're going to the something option.

That kicks us immediately outside of the material world. Materialism must be false. And then it's got to have these characteristics. Because if you say what caused that Big Bang I heard in the room? Oh, a pen fell on the carpet. No, that's not going to work because it's not adequate to the effect. When you start looking at that, now you're getting a kind of a profile of what's in the running. And what's in the running is someone like we're advancing. Now, whether it's the God of the Bible, that's a different kind of step. It's a different issue, a different set of questions, etc., and a different type of defense that we're offering.

FRANK:

Now, notice ladies and gentlemen what Greg is doing here. And by the way, we're talking to Greg Koukl, his new book is Street Smarts. And we're talking. We're having kind of a little dialogue here about the objection I get even on college campuses. The atheists, the agnostics will say, well, yeah, okay, but we don't know what caused it. They just go to agnosticism. And what you're trying to do, it seems, is just try and make a modest point. You're not trying to get all

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the way to Jesus. No argument gets all the way to Jesus anyway. No cosmological argument does.

It gets you to what appears to be a spaceless, timeless, immaterial, powerful, personal, intelligent first cause that's outside the universe. It doesn't mean it's Jesus. It could be Allah. It could be some other theistic or deistic God. But at least it's not atheism. You know, you're moving people toward what appears to be a theistic result.

GREG:

Yeah, that's right. And we're putting a stone in their shoe. We're just giving them something to think about. And the minute they say, we don't know what caused it, and I don't want folks to miss this. That's an implicit admission that something caused it, that's progress. Because materialism is dead at that point. If the material world is what was the effect, then the cause couldn't have been material. Now, that's a huge step forward. You can't be a materialistic atheist right now. Now, you may be a genuine agnostic. Most atheists that claim to be agnostic, are not agnostic.

Because an agnostic is somebody who doesn't know. All right? Let me back up for a minute. An agnostic is a belief category, not a knowledge category. Okay? Just like theism and atheism, those atheists who call themselves agnostics because they don't know, actually believe there is no God, even if they don't know for sure. Atheism is belief that there is no God. Theism is belief that there is a God. That's why they call theists, believers, and atheists non-believers. Whether they know or not, that's another issue entirely. And sometimes this gets confused in the conversations.

FRANK:

We're talking to Greg Koukl. His brand new book, *Street Smarts*, comes out in September. You need to preorder it now wherever you get books. Order *Street Smarts*. It's going to help you quite a bit having conversations. Those of you who have listened to this program have probably read *Tactic*. I've recommended it a lot. In fact, I even sell the book at CrossExamined.org because it's a very effective book.

This is going to go to the next level now. This is going to actually apply the tactics to specific issues. And that's what we're talking about here. And when we come back from the break, we're going to talk about problems with the Bible. Because there are problems with the Bible that we need to be able to answer in a very effective way. And Greg is going to give us some insights on how to do that. So, don't go anywhere. We're back in just two minutes.

Welcome back to *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* with me, Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. If you're low on the FM dial looking for NPR, go no further. You're never going to hear this on National Public Radio. Not Greg Koukl on National Public Radio. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. People who are fighting for inclusion,

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tolerance, and diversity will not include you. They will not tolerate you. They will exclude you for having diverse views like this, Greg.

So, in any event, we're talking about how to navigate this culture. And earlier in the program, we just referenced The Overton Window. We don't have time to unpack that here today. We were talking about it here at the CrossExamined Instructor Academy. Just look up The Overton Window and you can see what it means. Basically, the bottom line is, there are certain ideas that are acceptable in the culture because they're in this window, and other ideas that are outside that window, and they're not acceptable. And right now, many Christian ideas are outside the window. So, you can't just state these ideas without giving a defense. And the best way to give a defense, quite honestly, most of the time is through questions.

GREG:

Yeah. And by the way, one of the things I got from that window was that the things that used to be on the extreme, are now mainstream. And the things that used to be mainstream, that's our ideas, are now in the extreme.

FRANK:

And so, let's deal with some of the problems in the Bible, Greg. Because there are questions that people have about the Bible. Christians have questions about the Bible. One of them seems to be this issue of slavery. Doesn't the Bible condone slavery?

GREG:

Okay, so now the backstory for us is that the word translated slave in the Old Testament, ebed, is the transliteration. Actually, in the King James Version...

FRANK:

They get it right. Yeah.

GREG:

Yeah, they almost never translate it as slave, because it's the same word that can be translated servant. And even in my New American Standard concordance, two thirds of the time, it's still translated servant. It's interesting. So, Moses is a servant of God, an ebed. But he also had slaves, ebeds. And there was a shift in translation towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Why that shift happened? I don't know.

But what ends up happening, is people, especially in the American tradition, or the Western civilization tradition, they have a very particular understanding or picture in their mind when they see the word slavery. Okay? And this is what they think the Bible is condoning. So, it's not. And so, what I'm going to ask them when they bring up the issue of slavery...

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And remember, I have an understanding about what is wrong with the challenge, given the biblical record. And I am going to use questions to help them give me information, put stuff on the table, that I can use to make my case.

FRANK:

Give me some of those questions.

GREG:

Okay, so I'm going to ask him, when you hear the word slavery, what do you think of?

FRANK:

I think of racism, kidnapping people, putting them under forced servitude, not treating them well.

GREG:

Murdering at will, raping at will. It's all part of the package. And my response is, if that's the kind of thing that the Bible affirmed, I'd be shocked too. I'd be upset too. So, I understand. Notice how I'm sympathizing with their concern. Okay? At least the way they understand what they think the Bible talks about. My next point is here's something you maybe didn't know. Did you know that kidnapping in the Bible, according to the Mosaic Law, which talks about slavery.... I'll get to that in a moment.

Kidnapping is a capital crime. You kidnap somebody, you get executed. Did you know that murder was a capital crime? Did you know that rape was a capital crime? Okay? If murder, rape, and kidnapping are capital crimes in the Mosaic Law, and the Mosaic Law talks about slavery, then it cannot be the kind of slavery that comes to mind when you think of.

FRANK:

What kind of slavery was it then?

GREG:

So, it's something different. Now, this is something else that you may not know. The Hebrew word translated slave, ebed, is the same word that is translated servant. And when you look closely at the details, I mean, this is not exactly a tidy situation. I acknowledge that. Everybody was a slave, or a slave owner of some sense, had servants or whatever, in the Old Testament.

FRANK:

Not just in the Old Testament, but across the world.

GREG:

Yeah, my misstep there. But what you had was an opportunity for people to make a living, because they had to do something or serve, in many cases, serve someone. Single women, women who had been raped even, or parents that had to find some way of giving them a livelihood. If they could indenture themselves, in other words, they could sell their labor. Which

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is basically what we all do to our employer. We sell ourselves in labor to them to get paid for. It looked a little different then than it did now. But even in the colonies, I'm reading a biography of Benjamin Franklin.

There were all kinds of indentured servants. That's how they started America. People indentured themselves. They gave themselves as servants for a period of time, to work for them, so they can make a living. But here's the key about the Mosaic Law. All those indentured servants, and they had them all over. But they had no protection. In the law, they had union protection. Because the indentured servants got one day off every week. They were protected from violence. You break their tooth, and you had to set them free. If they escaped, they got protection from the law.

FRANK:

And after six years of service, they were also let go.

GREG:

Yeah, if they were Jewish, year of Jubilee. So, all I'm saying here, Frank, as I understand your concern. But because of translation confusion, and also, we have a heritage of grotesque behavior in this country, that was abominable. It's easy for us to portray that going on in the Scripture, as the same thing that happened, and it's just not the same thing. It's very different. In fact, it was really a step up from everybody else, to express human dignity and to protect people who were vulnerable. By the way. Do you know who was responsible for the abolition of slavery in the West? Do you know?

FRANK:

Well, Wilberforce.

GREG:

Wilberforce, as an individual in the UK. Wilberforce did it. Why?

FRANK:

Because he was a Christian.

GREG:

Because he was a Christian. Not because he was an atheist, not because he was a humanist. I'm not putting down atheists or humanists on this. They can have convictions against slavery, fine. But it turns out, that it was Christians who understood that the kind of forced servitude that was witnessed in the West was just dishonoring to God and wrong, and they undid it.

FRANK:

There were Christians that tried to perpetuate the kind of chattel slavery we had here in America. And they did so illegitimately. In fact, they even created the Slave Bible where they took out any verse that seemed to contradict slavery.

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GREG:

Oh, I didn't know about that.

FRANK:

And yeah, our friend, Jon McCray, over there at Whaddo You Meme, has a little video on this, which is quite interesting. Because the Bible is about liberation. Although it is true that the Bible does not express an outright outlaw of the kind of slavery that the Old Testament had. Because it was necessary in order to allow people to live as you said earlier, to make a living. These people were destitute. How else are they going to make a living? If they were in debt, they put themselves basically in service to somebody who would pay them and take care of them.

GREG:

This is why I think it's just a mistake to just keep using the word slavery, because these were servants. They were indentured servants. They had obligations to their employer, and those took on a form that was natural in the Ancient Near East. Different, for what we have. But keep in mind, they had legal union representations called the Mosaic Law.

FRANK:

Now, there are many other objections related to this issue, and I know you cover some of them in Street Smarts. The scholar who's really looked into this in great detail is our mutual friend, Paul Copan. So, Paul has written a couple of books. One is called, "Is God a Moral Monster?", that gets into this in great detail. And I think the newer one is called "Is God a Vindictive Bully?" And so, for folks that really want to go into depth on that issue and other issues, you can go there. Greg, we're running out of time here.

GREG:

And yeah, just a qualifier. I'm glad you brought up Paul's book, because I can't take a deep dive in every issue in a book like this. We're covering what I think are the most important, and the most useful, for engaging people with questions to put a stone in their shoe. That's all in this book, Street Smarts.

FRANK:

Now, why is it so important to ask questions, rather than make statements in today's culture?

GREG:

Well, as I mentioned a little bit earlier, if you're making statements, that puts you in a combative environment for one. So, you're saying, you're wrong, and I'm right, and here's why you're wrong. Secondly, when you make statements, you are making claims that are controversial. That puts burden of proof on your shoulders. So, if you say something is so and it's controversial, then you've got to give some reasons why it's so. And those who are contending with you are very happy to ask you, and to challenge those issues. And a lot of Christians don't have solid reasons.

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So, you're in a combative situation where now you're vulnerable, and somebody could just disagree with you. And so, these kinds of conversations are hard enough. You don't want to make them more difficult. If you use a tactical approach, using questions, you are not vulnerable. You are not making claims. You are using questions to make your point, but you're not vulnerable.

So, especially in the first couple of steps of the game plan, you're in the shallow end of the pool. It's easy, okay? And you want to continue that. Plus, it's more amicable. I mean, you're kind of roleplaying a little bit. And you're a little hostile, but I'm just responding and asking questions. It's easy for me. I can be relaxed because I know the game plan and I know what I'm trying to do. I have some street smarts. And that's what we want to give to others.

FRANK:

So, check it out, friends. Street Smarts, you should preorder it. You're going to want this book. Is it going to be in Audible too?

GREG:

It's already in Audible. I do the reading.

FRANK:

Oh okay. It's already in Audible.

GREG:

We have a study guide, videos, we have the whole suite of the tool.

FRANK:

Okay, beautiful. Where do they get the study guide, Greg?

GREG:

Well, they can get everything on Amazon, of course. It's not ready yet. But the book itself is ready for preorder. But by the launch, I think the whole suite will be available. There's a Zondervan website. To be a good author with Zondervan, I'm supposed to tell you what the website is, but I can't remember.

FRANK:

Google Street Smarts, you'll find it. It's a book you need to get friends, because it applies tactics which are critical to real world everyday situations that we're dealing with as Christians. So, pick up Street Smarts today and Greg, it's always a pleasure.

GREG:

Always is.

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FRANK:

Alright, thanks, Greg. All right, friends. We'll see you here next week, Lord willing. Don't forget about the "Stealing from God" course that starts on August 14. Also, a real fun course this summer, "Why Can't You Be Normal Just Like Me?" You'll want to check that out as well at CrossExamined.org. Alright, see you here next week. God Bless.

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