

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

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Shining A Light on the New Age Deception | with Melissa Dougherty

(August 25, 2023)

FRANK:

Welcome to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with me, Frank Turek. I am here in Albuquerque, New Mexico with my friend, Melissa Dougherty. And we are here for the CrossExamined Instructor Academy. The reason we're here is because Melissa wanted us to come here. And for those of you that don't know who Melissa is, her YouTube channel is exploding. What is the YouTube channel, Melissa? Just so everyone knows.

MELISSA:

What is my YouTube channel? My name, Melissa Dougherty. Real original, I know.

FRANK:

How creative is that? That is amazing. Now, you came out of the New Age and that is as creative as you could have gotten?

MELISSA:

Yeah, you know, you'd expect more from me. In hindsight, it's funny. I was just talking to Alisa earlier because I'm like, man, I didn't know that anybody would like my talking face. Right? I didn't know that anybody would want to listen to what I had to say to this extent. And I would have come up with something ministry like, like wittier or something.

FRANK:

Something new agey.

MELISSA:

Other than my name, but yeah, it is what it is. CrossExamined, you know that works too.

FRANK:

Well, you could use that. Or you could just use MelissaCrystalsAndMist.com.

MELISSA:

That would get the point across.

FRANK:

So anyway, we're going to talk about a lot of issues on this program today. First of all, we're in Albuquerque. You're a native of Albuquerque. It is sort of a left leaning place. Very new agey. So is Santa Fe, I've been there. So, how did you become a Christian? First of all, how did you start out? What did you believe as a younger person? And how did you become a Christian?

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MELISSA:

So, I always grew up in a household that taught about God. It was New Age, New Thought, which I'll explain that in a minute. They're not the same thing. And I always heard about Jesus, and the power of our minds. And Scripture was quoted and all the things. It was just a really mystical kind of view of Jesus. But I became a Christian at 16. So, my impression of Jesus was, oh, he exists. God exists. And for me, I remember it was an eclipse. I saw an eclipse as a kid. And I'm like, there has to be a God. Like, I intrinsically knew, because that was too perfect to me. Just the perfect size of the moon.

FRANK:

So, it was a design argument that got you.

MELISSA:

It was the design. And I was small. I didn't know the teleological argument or anything like that. But there was something intrinsic about watching an eclipse. And so, I became an actual Christian at 16. And it was amazing. I had a really great experience with that, best six months of my life after that. But I had questions that nobody could answer. And I've talked about this a lot, but just basic one on one questions, couldn't answer. And what ended up happening is the beliefs that I grew up with, and the Christianity that I just adopted, because it wasn't strengthened and disciplined, I ended up accidentally adopting really New Thought teachings. New Age is always a part of that. But it looks Christian. New Thought looks Christian.

FRANK:

What is New Thought?

MELISSA:

New Thought. Okay, so it's a term. It's not new, and ironically, it doesn't use a lot of the brain that you think it would. So thought is kind of strange. But it's not new. It's the same lie, regurgitated that you can be like God. You are divine in some way. But New Thought is not New Age. New Age is its own bucket. New Thought. Literally, this is what I want you to do. Take every Christian definition, and rehash it in a metaphysical definition, and you have New Thought. So, everything has a different meaning. Christ is not Anointed One and Messiah. It is on the literal sense, but it means your inner divinity that you can awaken.

Atonement means something else, justification everything else. And so, you see these words, and talking about Jesus, and salvation, and all the things, and wow. This sounds super spiritual. This sounds like wow. These close-minded, judgmental, literal Christians have no idea what they're talking about. And the thing is, and this is key. It's rooted in Gnosticism. So, there's always a secret underlying esoteric meaning in Scripture. And only those awakened in the Christ Consciousness can understand Scripture. And so, you're always trying to do that.

You're always trying to keep your mind awake. It's positive thinking. It started with the mind cure movement in the 1800's with a guy named Phineas Quimby, where your mind could heal you.

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And it worked. People actually found that they felt better, and he claimed to be healed through these methods. And so, what happened is, there became this universal view of mind, a divine mind where the universe, God is an it. And they think it's strange that we have an anthropomorphic view of God. It's an it and it lives inside. And so, I'm thinking, wow. This is a higher level of Christianity. But New Age is fine. I'm fine using that term as an ex-New Ager and New Age. I've always explained myself as an ex-New Ager. I just think people understand it. And they always overlap. There's always overlap there.

FRANK:

So, you became a Christian when you were 16. Six months later, because nobody got you answers, you're now involved in New Thought.

MELISSA:

Yes. And I had no idea. I thought it was real Christianity.

FRANK:

So, what did you do practically in this religion? How did it change your life?

MELISSA:

In New Thought?

FRANK:

Yeah.

MELISSA:

Thinking, oh, gosh. I felt very powerful. And the thing is that with progressive Christianity...Me and Alisa Childers have a joke where there's just so much overlap there. I was very progressive too. And I just didn't know the word for it. You're like a walking co-exist sticker. Everybody loves you. Everybody likes you. And you think that you are the poster child of tolerant Christianity. And everybody likes that kind of Jesus. That's a Jesus that they can relate to. Supposedly, that's a Jesus that everybody can accept. And so, that was kind of the thing that I liked.

FRANK:

So, Jesus was essentially Barney you're saying?

MELISSA:

Basically.

FRANK:

Okay. Can't we all just get along, boys and girls? [Laughter]

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MELISSA:

Yes, and the fact that you felt powerful. Like the Law of Attraction, that's not New Age. That's New Thought. And the idea is that your thoughts, words, and emotions have power. And when you're taught that, that the world, everything, you are made out of energy. Everything around us is made out of energy and has a frequency. And if I can somehow manipulate that and effect that with my thoughts and emotions, how powerful, right? And so, you're told and taught these things, and there's an appeal to it.

FRANK:

So, you're taught that you're God, essentially?

MELISSA:

Yes. So, people hear that. That's the basic underlying everything.

FRANK:

How do all these gods then die? We put them in coffins and put them in the ground. How does that work? How do they explain that?

MELISSA:

Well, there's an ultimate reconciliation, or a sense of universalism after you die. Right. For example, you know how I said everything's not literal, right? The resurrection isn't literal, either, in New Thought. The resurrection is like an awakening of your conscious. That's how they would see that.

FRANK:

So, you do live on in a conscious state?

MELISSA:

Yes.

FRANK:

But do you become one with the universe?

MELISSA:

Yeah.

FRANK:

So, how are you still conscious if you're one with the universe?

MELISSA:

How are you still conscious if you're one with the universe? I'm not sure how they'd answer that. I don't think I even thought that far.

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FRANK:

So, there's no systematic theology of New Age or New Thought?

MELISSA:

Yeah, that's actually a good way to put it. And that's the thing. You can't have either one of these without relativism. Living your truth, self-reliance is a big thing. Your self is the authority. It's the inner divine. And this is why these beliefs are so melded into society, because you have to respect everybody's truth and what they believe, because that's what their inner divine is saying. It's garbage, Frank.

FRANK:

So, explain why this is a variation of the first lie.

MELISSA:

Because it's that you're divine, that you can be your own God. That's where New Age and New Thought basically go together. You're your own God. And we hear that in our ears. We think that's ridiculous. That's wrong because we have what I would see as a correct view of God, especially as to how the Bible reveals him and how nature reveals him. But for them, God is within us all. And it's in the universal melding of the universe. They call it the divine mind.

FRANK:

But it's an it. So, how can a mind be an it? Because a mind is supposed to have will, but it's don't have will.

MELISSA:

You're asking the very questions that I would ask, and they have asked. In fact, I've done interviews about this, which we'll talk about in just a minute.

FRANK:

Yeah, we've got 30 more seconds. Go ahead.

MELISSA:

Well, real quick, let me give you the 30 second rundown of this. I mean, I got out of these beliefs because I was forced to think about them. It's kind of a thing. Jehovah's Witnesses came in and kind of asked me questions I didn't know how to answer and that was in 2011. And I've been in ministry ever since.

FRANK:

Jehovah's Witnesses saved you out of New Thought and then you became a Christian?

MELISSA:

It's crazy.

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FRANK:

Man, those Jehovah's Witnesses are very effective evangelists for Christianity are they How did that happen?

MELISSA:

The irony still gets me, yeah.

FRANK:

Well, we're going to have a lot more with Melissa Dougherty. And actually, her website is MelissaDougherty.co (not dot com). How has this teaching infiltrated the church? That's my next question. You're not going to want to miss the rest of this podcast so don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Back in two. If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio, go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent anyway.

You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest today, former New Ager, New Thinker, now Christian apologist and phenomenal YouTuber, Melissa Dougherty. Before I get back to Melissa, though, you need to know that we're just about to start the "Stealing from God" online course. We have only a few slots left. If you want to be a part of the "Stealing from God" online course, go to CrossExamined.org. Click on online courses, you'll see it there.

If you take the premium version, you'll be with me on at least six occasions for one hour plus Q&A Zoom sessions where you can ask any question you want, and we'll interact and learn from one another. Alright, let me go back to my guest, Melissa Dougherty. So, Melissa, you actually became a Christian as a result of a Jehovah's Witness coming to your door and you were a New Ager?

MELISSA:

Yeah.

FRANK:

And so, how did that motivate you to get into the Bible and learn who the true God was?

MELISSA:

Well, it was something they said that caused me to research their religion. And it was that Jesus was Michael the archangel. I want to say it's religious pluralism, but it's really not. It's syncretism. But, you know, all beliefs believe in the same thing. There's truth in all beliefs. And therefore, many different paths to God. Many different ways to truth. And so, that's kind of how I believed in Christian denominations. The only difference is that I had a daughter at the time.

And I'm like, oh, she's going to grow up and ask me questions. And maybe I should revisit these questions that I used to have. And I thought when they came to my door, I'm like, oh, the

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universe, God, you're giving me the answers that I always wanted. And I thought I manifested them. It's hilarious to me still to this day. And they just started telling me what they believe. And that Jesus was Michael the archangel really bothered me.

And so, I started researching their religion. And what happened is, simultaneously, I'm learning hey, if they're wrong...because you know, a lot of ministries existed online at the time to show what Jehovah's Witnesses believed and why they were wrong. And they were very good. If they're wrong, and they're right, but then if they're right, I'm wrong. And so, it caused me to research the biggest hurdle to my whole Christian life was the Bible. I did not trust the Bible. I did not know where it came from, anything like that. So, long story short, I did the research. I asked a lot of questions. And there were people in these ministries that really helped me and helped answer my questions.

And that's one reason and how I got into witnessing to cults, first off, because they were the first ones I learned about. And I loved them. I still do. I have a love for Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, and I love talking to them. But it took me a long time to talk about this thing, this belief system that I had just come out of, because I was trying to understand it. And I was kind of embarrassed. People in my church, especially could not understand where I was coming from. So, it was kind of lonely. And the thing was, is that over time, I realized, wow. You guys believe in these things, too. You just don't know it.

And particularly, the beliefs that I believed in, prosperity and positive confessions, specifically and the Law of Attraction actually, I saw in the church. The same scriptures, same exact terms, same exact sentences, everything. And I'm like, whoa. How is this happening? Do you guys know what you're doing here? Because I'm reading this in the Bible, like why that's wrong on this area, New Age, New Thought, and like, why is this wrong? But then why are we over here in the church doing it? So, that's when I started really kind of connecting? Oh, there's things in the church that people are trying to make good of these things.

FRANK:

It wasn't this church we're at right now, right? We're right now at Calvary Chapel, Albuquerque, and the pastor is Skip Heitzig, who has been a great pastor for many years. I love Calvary Chapels, because they preach through the Bible. They teach people what the Bible says, essentially. And they've got some great preachers. So, Skip is one of them. Jack Hibbs is another. There are several great Calvary Chapel pastors, and you've been at this church how long? The one we're at right now.

MELISSA:

Around three years. Yeah.

FRANK:

So, you're going to another church, and these New Age, New Thought, beliefs were infiltrating into the church. Our listeners and viewers right now are wondering what those were, and how

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can they identify them in their own church if in fact they are in their own church? Give us a few of them.

MELISSA:

Yeah. So, I mentioned a few times, and I really want to parse this out. There's a difference between New Age and New Thought. New Thought is supposed to look Christian. Same terms, same terminology, and I think that's really where Christians get tripped up.

FRANK:

Who termed it New Thought? Where does this come from?

MELISSA:

Oh, you know, it's funny you say that because in my research...I can't remember the name of the guy. He was a New Thought author who named it New Thought. But the idea was that these are New Thoughts for a New Age. And it was in the 1800s, you know, because that's when the New Thought movement was coming about. But late 1700's, early 1800's.

FRANK:

A lot of cults came out of the 1800's.

MELISSA:

I literally was about to have that come out of my mouth. Yes.

FRANK:

Yeah. I mean, you've got Jehovah's Witnesses. You've got Mormons, you've got now...

MELISSA:

The mind science cures, you have...

FRANK:

Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science.

MELISSA:

Christian Science is New Thought. Here's the thing with Christian Science. My great-grandparents were Christian scientists. And a lot of the books that were on my shelf.

FRANK:

You don't mean they were physicists. They were what? [Laughter]

MELISSA:

Which is ironic. You know how you said progressive Christianity is neither progressive nor Christian? They're neither Christian nor scientists. But to them, in their language, what they were trying to relay is that this is a pragmatic Christianity. This is a Christianity that isn't based

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on just faith. This is their definition, not what I believe. But there's a tangible way to use these things from the universe in order to meet your needs.

FRANK:

So, it's all about you. It's all meology rather than theology?

MELISSA:

Yes.

FRANK:

So, this is a way I can manipulate this "god", whatever it is, for my own benefit.

MELISSA:

Yeah. And see, they wouldn't see it that way. They would say that, oh, I'm not manipulating anything. It's within me. I'm just trying to awaken it. That's how they would see that.

FRANK:

You're trying to awaken the God within.

MELISSA:

You're trying to awaken your divine. So, what they would say, and you'll hear me talk about this tomorrow in person. But like the Christ Consciousness. People hear that and they wonder what it is. But Christ Consciousness, this trips people up because it sounds Christian. It's not New Age, though. Christ Consciousness is not New Age. That is a New Thought term. And the idea is that that's your inner, dormant divinity, waiting to be awakened. So, Jesus obtained the Christ. And that's what made him divine. And you can do the same thing. Absolute garbage. If you were to have a literal reading of Scripture, you would never walk away with that. You have to have this non-literal, I don't want to say subjective, but what they would say metaphysical view.

FRANK:

Or allegorical, metaphorical view. So, what specific views did you see in a supposedly Evangelical Church?

MELISSA:

Yeah, so, let's get back to that. So, first, I'm going to start with Law of Attraction.

FRANK:

What is it? What is the Law of Attraction?

MELISSA:

It's specifically New Thought, not New Age. There's an idea that I think I explained it to you just a second ago. Everything has a frequency. Your thoughts, feelings, and emotions have an impact on the frequencies around you based on how you feel. And so, if the universe is a mirror,

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and you're a mirror. And so, what that means, and I'm making this a very simple explanation. What I'm thinking and feeling has to be reflected back to me. So, how I treat you and how I talk to you, I'm talking to myself, is how I would view that.

And that's how they would take verses like Matthew 7:7, Ask, seek, believe, you will receive. And then do unto others, you do to yourself. They take those things. Those are true things. But do you see how within context of what I just said, how that could be twisted, into what I do to you, I do to myself. Law of Attraction is in the Bible. It's everywhere. And lots of writers have written about it. And the other thing with the Law of Attraction, though. This is specifically how it's in the church.

I hear a lot of Christians talk about the concept of a Law of Attraction, without using the word. Where it's like, oh, I don't want to speak that and believe it. I can't say that, you know? I'm going to attract that to myself. But then there's also this, if you take the opposite, and embrace it and think, wow. Yes, this is in the Bible, and I can speak it. I can make this happen. If I have enough faith, I can manifest this. I can create this. This is in the Bible.

FRANK:

It is sort of aligned with the Prosperity Gospel movement then?

MELISSA:

Yes, that's the next thing. And again, I'll talk about this tomorrow.

FRANK:

But these people listening, won't be here tomorrow. So go ahead. [Laughter]

MELISSA:

It's going to be repetitious for Frank. But there's demonstrable overlap between the Prosperity Gospel and the Word of Faith. So, the Word of Faith trickles into the N.A.R. and the N.A.R. New Apostolic Reformation. They're kind of the same bucket. All right. More on that in a second. But the Word of Faith is where it's prosperity preaching. That God wants you to be well. He wants you to be healthy, he wants you to be wealthy. This is part of the Gospel.

Now what people don't realize is, there's three things that make up the Prosperity gospel. The mind cure movement, which kind of came in, you know, like you have all these people speaking in tongues, and they're trying to, and they're Christian. And then you have the Pentecostalism, and then you have New Thought. So, it's not just New Thought. So, people that say that, oh, it's all this New Thought. It's all them. It's not. It's actually a mixture of those things. However, I believe I can show that prosperity teaching and positive confessions really overlap with New Thought teachings, demonstrably.

And, in fact, there was a woman. Her name was Emma Curtis Hopkins. She was a devout, New Thought, feminist. Nobody's ever heard of her. But you have heard of her teachings. And there

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was a saying, there is good, and I ought to have it. That simple saying, it was a mantra, an affirmation. Not a mantra, that's more New Age. It's affirmation that they would say over and over again. It evolved into the Prosperity Gospel, because God is good and he wills you to only have goodness, health, wealth, prosperity, everything. And what ended up happening, is this got adopted into mainstream churches.

And so, the origins of the Prosperity Gospel, very much overlap with New Thought. And then positive confession. Every time I read about positive confession, I'm like, man, this is the Law of Attraction. Just speaking, believing, receiving, manifesting your desires. If you want it, and you have enough faith, you must have it. Everything I just said are from New Thought writers. Yet people that are familiar with Word of Faith teachings think, oh, that's in my church. Actually, everything I just quoted is from New Thought authors. So, that's why I was confused. Now, specifically New Age. You know, before we got on, we talked about Bethel. And I have made a lot of videos about Bethel. I have a bone to pick with Bethel, because of these things.

FRANK:

Explain to people who are listening who Bethel is.

MELISSA:

Bethel Redding, in California. And they are a charismatic church. Let me just start with this. They do a lot of good things. I know many charismatics that have taught me a lot about prayer. They have taught me so much about many things. Things in the Bible that I never even would have thought of. So, it's not charismatic. Specifically, this is the leadership at Bethel. And for the record, Bethel is very well-known in the Christian atmosphere for their music. And their music is actually part of their theology. And the experts on this are Holly Pivec and Doug Geivett.

FRANK:

They wrote a book recently called Counterfeit Kingdom. If you want to go deep on this, that's the book to get. Go ahead. Oh, gee, we're up on a break. Look at that. [Laughter]

MELISSA:

I got you.

FRANK:

You got me. You're looking at the clock. I'm so engrossed. We're with Melissa Dougherty. We got three seconds. We're back in two minutes. Don't go anywhere. Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. My guest, Melissa Dougherty, MelissaDougherty.co. Get that right. We were talking just before the break, about this Church known as Bethel, up in Northern California. Pick it up right where we left off.

MELISSA:

Yeah. And so, a lot of us have been very open about talking about this, because I think it needs to be addressed, you know, and balanced. Because these are people. They have feelings, they

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have beliefs. I think that we need to be mindful, though, to call out bad theology, because bad theology hurts people. And people get hurt by this, and they get mad at God. And I think it's really important that people understand that a lot of the foundation for a lot of these beliefs are not biblical. And that changes everything. Because all of a sudden, you're like, oh, I can separate God from the church.

FRANK:

What would you say is one of their central beliefs that isn't biblical?

MELISSA:

Well, okay, since we're on the topic of New Age. One of my biggest pickles is this. And they have actually currently taken down this book from their bookstore, "Physics of Heaven." I made a video about it. But basically, this book, the entire book is an apologetic for why we need to go into the New Age and New Thought and redeem it for the Gospel. So, let me put it this way. Things like auras, spirit guides, crystals.

FRANK:

Christians ought to be practicing that stuff?

MELISSA:

Yes, we should really be redeeming them.

FRANK:

What does that mean?

MELISSA:

Redeeming them. So basically, you're taking something that I believe God told you to divorce, to stay away from? And you're saying, no. We need to use this for the kingdom. We can make this good.

FRANK:

But what is the kingdom according to them?

MELISSA:

Okay, this has to do with their eschatology. All right, this is my theory and I believe it could be shown. I always wondered this. Why are they so obsessed with signs, wonders, and miracles? I never understood this. Because there's this hunger, sinful hunger for power. And this is my thing, is that I loved having spiritual power. I thought that I could make things happen with my mind.

FRANK:

Did you, through an occult means do you think?

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MELISSA:

Did I? You know, there's a few times. And that's the thing, is that people do it because it works.

FRANK:

Because there is power. Yeah, that way.

MELISSA:

And I'm researching this right now, because I want to know why that works. Because that's why people use it. I mean, in the 1800's, people left Christianity by the droves for this thing, this New Thought thing. That they still are, by the way. There's New Thought centers, where people believe this stuff and don't realize, oh, that's not real Christianity. But this works for me, so it must be true. And the idea, especially healing. Healing was the biggest thing that sparked New Thought into what it is, because people would cure themselves through their thinking, through their mind.

And so, if you change how you think and how you believe, you will be healed. And you hear this a lot from faith healers. Why do you think you hear them say, don't say you're sick. Don't say that. You will make it happen if you say it, because your words have power.

FRANK:

I'm so sick of these people.

MELISSA:

Tell me about it. Think about Richard Howe's wife is out there right now. Right? You've got Hilary here and she's sick.

FRANK:

Hilary Morgan Ferrer, yea.

MELISSA:

My best friend in the world is chronically ill. And I'm sitting here, I'm like, you know what?

FRANK:

It's their fault, right? They just didn't have enough faith. They're not thinking right.

MELISSA:

In fact, okay. So, the research that I'm doing for all of this. I've been doing interviews galore, and I'll call. There's a New Thought spiritual center out in Arizona. And I called them and I'm just interviewing whoever will talk to me. And I asked them the same set of questions. And the first thing I asked her about, or at least we got talking about is sickness. And she said she felt like a fraud. And I'm like, well, why? And she's like, well. And she hesitated deeply. And she's like, because I'm...and then she stopped. I'm sick.

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And I'm like, oh. And immediately I knew how hard and why that was so hard for her to say. You're not supposed to say that. But after I said that. It's like, she thought maybe I would correct her. She's not in a church. This is a woman with New Thought beliefs. And so, I asked her. I'm like, well, what do you have? And she's like, well...and she hummed and hawed, and immediately changed the subject. And again, I knew why. You're not supposed to dwell on that negative thing, because you will attract it to yourself. All right.

Now let me circle on back here to Bethel. Their theology, everything that has to do with signs, wonders, and miracles, in my opinion, has everything to do with their eschatology. Holly and Doug, parse this out so much better in my opinion in their book, "Counterfeit Kingdom." Please get it. I think Christians really need to know about these things. They have a very balanced, very fair, they don't go after them. You know what I mean?

FRANK:

Personally, they're just trying to look at their theology and see if it works. Test all things, said Paul. Paul named false teachers on six occasions in his books, named them.

MELISSA:

Romans 16 talks about this. He specifically says you can't get mad at the people correcting the bad theology. Get mad at the people bringing in the bad theology.

FRANK:

Romans 16, which is flyover country for most people because it's mostly like, greet Rufus. I don't know who Rufus is. [Laughter] But he basically says the divisive people are the people bringing the false teachings in, not the people who are trying to support the true teachings. So, you're not divisive if you call people out. Hey, that's a false teaching. They're the divisive ones, the false teachers. So, Bethel, the kingdom. What is the kingdom to them?

MELISSA:

So, they have a kingdom now theology. It's dominion theology. The basic way I'm going to put this is they have an over realized eschatology. They believe that it's their job to bring Jesus back through signs, wonders and miracles. And its kingdom now theology, because they believe...and Bill Johnson's book is named this. He's the pastor there. What is the name of his book? It's literally...

FRANK:

How to make love last forever? No? What is it? [Laughter]

MELISSA:

Oh, man, I even did a video on it. It has fallen out of my brain and it's working so well today. I'm proud of myself but in this moment. "Heaven on Earth"!

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FRANK:

Heaven on earth? We're building Utopia?

MELISSA:

Something like that. Yeah. Oh, man. I'll get it right after we go off.

FRANK:

We'll put it in the show notes. We'll put it in a link, so don't worry about it. No, we don't want them to get the book. Forget that. No. [Laughter]

MELISSA:

Well, I mean for research purposes. Yeah, I read the whole book. He is talking about this, as on heaven, as on Earth, literally. Because if it happens in heaven, it should happen on earth. So, if it's kingdom now, the kingdom is now. And they take Acts 2, the Pentecost. It's not that they take it too seriously. I respect the way that they look at certain things, I do. This is overboard, though. Over realized. And so, they believe that the kingdom is here and now. That means you shouldn't be sick. You should not be poor.

FRANK:

Oh, this is the difference.

MELISSA:

Yes.

FRANK:

Okay. The kingdom is already here, despite the fact Jesus saying in this world, you will have trouble but take heart, I have overcome the world. Despite Paul saying...

MELISSA:

Who needs the Bible?

FRANK:

Oh, I'm sorry, I'm quoting the Bible. Despite Paul saying that everyone who lives a faithful life in Jesus will be persecuted. Despite most of Paul's letters being written to suffering Christians, that we shouldn't be suffering. That there is no suffering. That it's our fault because we don't have enough faith. We're not thinking the right things. That's it?

MELISSA:

This is strange, because the thing is, is that if you were to challenge them with these kinds of Scriptures, what I've come across is that a lot of them would agree with you. A lot of them would agree with what you just said. But if you were to talk to somebody who's say, you know, really in line with these beliefs, the idea is, is that the Bible...it's almost like it's tangible. You can change it. And I can't say that they're as bad as somebody in New Thought. But it's really striking how

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you can come across a passage like that. And you'll have somebody in New Thought, and somebody in a Word of Faith Church, agree on how to interpret the Bible on some level.

And I'm like, oh, that's how you get that interpretation. Because it can't be literal. It's really interesting to me how that's something that I come across. Now, I cannot say that this is an across the board experience that I've had with everybody in this movement. But you're right. You're exactly right. That is the issue with it is that if you were to take Scripture and read it for what it is, it's very interesting how you would come up with the opposite of these beliefs. That's why I believe they need prophets and apostles, because they hear from God.

FRANK:

Oh, so are there white pages in the back of their Bibles that we're supposed to add revelation to? Do they mean that? What do they mean by that?

MELISSA:

They can't even say it's authoritative. And see, this is the thing. And again, Holly and Doug do such a good job on this. And the fallacy of ambiguity, in my opinion, is what they do.

FRANK:

What does that mean?

MELISSA:

Well, you know what, Frank? Today, I have a message from God. And I'm going to tell you that you're going to have trouble today. Yes. You're going to have trouble today. Tomorrow, you know what? God's trying to tell me that you need to just have courage. You need to have strength. See how ambiguous that is?

FRANK:

Aren't they just reading the horoscopes?

MELISSA:

Okay. Yes. So, here's the thing. It's like, can you not go to a horoscope and walk away with some way that this applies to you? And then you have a Get Out of Jail Free card if it doesn't apply, because it's vague enough if you're wrong. That's my opinion. I believe that's why they have prophets and apostles. Because people aren't going to that dusty book on the shelf. They're going to their apostle. They're going to their prophet to hear from God. And so, people end up discarding what Scripture says.

And that again, back to the New Age, New Thought. That's the whole premise. That's the whole idea. New Thought made the Bible a self-help book. What does this mean to me? How does this apply to me? And you have that overreach, you have that stretch over into religions and into mainstream Christianity and people don't realize it. And you have this ball of faith kind of just put

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together that have the same things in common, but they're separate. And with Bethel, specifically, they don't look at these things like they are something to be avoided.

They look at these things and think, we can save this because we need more power. And the idea is, because they have results. Remember, we talked about that? It works. And Ellen Davis and Judy Franklin, they were the two authors for "Physics of Heaven." And all the leaders at Bethel, by the way, put this book together. They went to Sedona and saw the results from the New Age. And they're like, wow. There's something here. We're missing something.

FRANK:

Sure there is. There's the occult. There is power in the occult. That's why you're supposed to stay away from it. There is a demonic power, and they've been tapping into it at church.

MELISSA:

Yes. Ironic. And so, I actually talked to a pastor, which I'll probably give more detail here in a second because we're done in 30 seconds, right?

FRANK:

We've got another minute.

MELISSA:

Oh, well, real quick then. So, I talked to a charismatic pastor about this. And I very frankly asked him. I'm like, so I don't understand this. There's people falling on the floor. There's all these crazy things happening. Where do you draw the line? And he's like, well, honestly, there is no line. I'm like, what do you mean there's no line? And he said, we'd rather open the door and allow everything in, hoping some of it's from God, then close it and miss something from God.

FRANK:

Wow. So, they can allow demonic teachings in along with supposed teachings from God.

MELISSA:

They have a defense for that. I'll explain that in a second.

FRANK:

Oh, there's a defense for that. Okay, well, I can see why this is opening people up to a lot of trouble and a lot of confusion.

MELISSA:

They would say God wouldn't allow them to be deceived.

FRANK:

Oh really?

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MELISSA:

Yes. They would say that's not something that's possible.

FRANK:

And they're deceived about that. Ironical. Okay. Well, you're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. My guest, Melissa Dougherty, MelissaDougherty.co. Also, her YouTube channel, if you want to go into depth on any of the things that she's mentioned here, she probably has a video on that YouTube channel where you can go a lot further. She came out of the New Thought movement herself. And now she's a Christian apologist, actually going to SES, Southern Evangelical Seminary, SES.edu. Great place to go to school. We're back in two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. My guest today, Melissa Dougherty. MelissaDougherty.co. Also check her at her YouTube channel. So much of what we talked about is her YouTube videos. Really cool YouTube videos, by the way. And you know what I really love are those satires where you play all the parts. That's really good. Who knew?

MELISSA:

It's kind of funny. Because it's like you take these classes in high school acting and all the things and you're like, you enjoy them. But then you don't think they're going to be practical later on, and I made something out of it.

FRANK:

They are, that's right. Now, let me ask you a question. Back to the Bethel movement, these folks that think they're trying to bring the kingdom in now, and nobody should ever get sick. Do they think nobody should ever die?

MELISSA:

You know, and it's funny, because they have the oddest excuse for that. I've asked a few people, and I've never actually gotten a straight answer. I'm sure they have one. To be sure. It's not like that's a gotcha, answer. I'm sure that there is a response. But they believe that you should live to be about 120.

FRANK:

Why then? Why do you die then? You don't have enough faith?

MELISSA:

Yeah, something like that. And the other thing is a sickness. So, this is the strange thing is that they believe that, and you have to go back to this. If you are sick, and you cannot be healed, there is an element that's either on you or the person praying for you. The reason why you are not healed has to do with either...

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Say you're sick, and I'm going over and I'm praying for you, and I'm praying on you and over you. They believe that there's power in that, that will heal you, as we should. Like, they're very good at this. They have a very good, like positive outlook. I'm telling you; I think it was JP Moreland. He was making a joke. But he's like, if you want theology, you go to like a Reformed Church. If you want prayer, you go to a charismatic church. And it was a joke, because he's like, that's bad. We shouldn't have that. They're good at this. Okay. The problem is, is that say, I'm praying for you and you're very sick. You're not healed. The blame has to go to you or me, has to.

FRANK:

Well, it's obviously you. I mean, come on.

MELISSA:

I'm too practical.

FRANK:

You didn't pray hard enough.

MELISSA:

I didn't. Something happened. Something went wrong. All right.

FRANK:

So, who do they blame Jesus's death for?

MELISSA:

They'd probably say that it's the same thing we'd say.

FRANK:

So, Paul got executed because it was his fault, or Luke didn't pray enough for him?

MELISSA:

You're asking the same questions that everybody would ask, yes. This is the same thing I would go to. I'm like, okay, well, how do you explain that? Like, I don't understand. This is the same exact response. This is why the Prosperity Gospel makes no sense. Nothing about it is real and tangible in that way.

FRANK:

Don't we want to graduate at some point? Don't we want to go be with Jesus? I mean, James was killed by the Sanhedrin thrown off the Temple Mount. Josephus tells us this by the way. It's not even in a New Testament document. In 62 AD, he died as a martyr. Was it his fault?

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MELISSA:

This is why the kingdom now theology matters. If you understand their eschatology, you will understand Bethel, and why they have the kingdom now theology. It's over realized. And this is why bad theology hurts people. If you don't have, even eschatology. We think, oh, you know, I'll figure it out. And even me, even I admit. I don't know if this is the right word, but I'm rather agnostic, right? I'm like, okay. I lean this way. You know, maybe like a pre-mil...

FRANK:

There are really smart people who know more than I do who come to opposite conclusions. But we all agree we win in the end. We agree Jesus comes back. When and how, Jesus himself said no one knows the day or the hour, the times, nor the season so Jesus is going to come like a thief in the night. We're all in agreement on that. Okay. We may have different ways of working that out theologically. But for people to say that the new heaven...Are they saying the new heavens and the new earth are already here?

MELISSA:

My understanding is that you know, because you have preterists, who believe that the whole Bible has happened. And I'm not even sure if that's the case with them. I believe that they can't believe that. My answer is I don't know what they believe about that. But the idea that they believe that there shouldn't be, as in Heaven, is on earth, as far as sickness, poverty, and all the things that prosperity, all that negativity. It's like, they don't think that should be part of the Christian life. And I just don't think that's correct. That hurts a lot of people.

FRANK:

Have any of the pastors in this movement gotten sick and died.

MELISSA:

Yes.

FRANK:

Who?

MELISSA:

Bill Johnson's wife, Beni Johnson.

FRANK:

Oh, no, really?

MELISSA:

Yeah, she got cancer and died like a year ago?

FRANK:

Well, that's tragic. I'm sorry to hear that.

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MELISSA:

Yeah, it's very sad.

FRANK:

Has there been any explanation?

MELISSA:

She got cancer. But no. I will say that I heard that Bill Johnson, when he spoke afterwards, when she died, he gave a really good sermon. Like, he was hurt. He was sad. And you know, we should be sad with him. But the elephant in the room is your theology is broken. Right? Like they're praying over her believing and prophesying that she would be healed. Her herself, a prophet. I believe she's a prophet, not an apostle in Bethel Church. If she can't be healed, who can be healed?

FRANK:

Right. And who's fault is it if that's their theology, that it's somebody's fault that she died? Either hers or Bill's fault, because he was praying for her.

MELISSA:

Something like that. Can't be God's fault. It can't be God's sovereign will. It can never be. And this is why I started with New Thought, the same concept. You cannot have anything bad if God only wants you to have good. The Prosperity Gospel overlaps.

FRANK:

Virtually all the apostles were martyred. What do they do with that?

MELISSA:

You're exactly right. That's the thing. Those are the challenges that they have to wrestle with. That's why there has to be a conscious unwillingness to look at certain things. And that's why they have to fall back on apostles and prophets. That's why you have to fall back on your own self-revelation.

FRANK:

So, when Peter says, don't be alarmed that this fiery trial has come upon you, that you're suffering. How would they interpret that passage?

MELISSA:

I don't know. And that would be a question to ask them.

FRANK:

And Paul talks about suffering in 2 Corinthians 4. Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us a greater way to glory that far outweighs them all.

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MELISSA:

Why do you know that? Why do you know all these scriptures? You read the Bible. You study it.

FRANK:

We have to be able to answer. It's a great question. Why does anyone get sick? Why does it seem to happen even kind of randomly? You have somebody who's a Christian, dies young. Somebody who is not, they live long healthy lives. Why is that? Those are great questions.

MELISSA:

There's a beautiful philosophy to it. And this is why I love SES as well, by the way. Shout out.

FRANK:

Southern Evangelical Seminary.

MELISSA:

They cover a lot of prolegomena, which is a fancy word for just what you do. What is truth? Does God exist? The before questions before you even get into the Bible? Brilliant, by the way, that is brilliant. And so, this is the thing though. It's like if there's an idea...bring me back. What were we just talking about?

FRANK:

We were just talking about how Paul talks about suffering, and Peter. Everyone talks about suffering in the Bible.

MELISSA:

Oh, death. A seminary professor was talking about this. The attributes of God, everything's spirit. Right? So, it's strange to make something material, humans, the earth. Things we can touch, and feel, and see. And we're in this other realm in that sense, okay. And this is really what got me, was the reason why we have to have a resurrection of the body. And for the longest time, it was like, oh, okay, there's a resurrection. But why? Because death is strange. That's a strange thing. And so, he's redeeming what was lost in a material way.

FRANK:

He's restoring.

MELISSA:

Exactly. Now, when you don't understand that, right? We're talking different things. We're talking about who God is, and how that works, and why that works. And then, oh, wow, this looks a lot like the God in the Bible. If you don't have a proper theology of who God even is to begin with, who is this being? And why is he the way he is? What are the attributes, right? They don't have

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that right. At all. This is where you have the Bible. It explains God the way that he is, and why he does certain things the way he does them.

And if you take away one of those, His Holiness, sovereignty, and providence, oh, man. You have made a big gap in His judgment. You've made a very big gap in who that God is. And so, in their way, that's what I believe, is that they've taken away the ability for God to have any sort of providence or sovereignty over sickness, over death, or anything like that. And they've taken it upon themselves.

FRANK:

Like he couldn't bring good from it due to the ripple effect, something we talk about in this program quite a bit. When we can't see any good coming from a given evil, doesn't mean there isn't good coming from it. God can redeem things, even hundreds of years from now, events that occurred today can ripple forward to effect events hundreds of years from now. Everyone experiences the ripple effect. If you just think about your own life, you wouldn't even exist unless your parents met. And then their parents met, and their parents met before that, etc.

I mean, there are ripples everywhere. We can't track them all. But God can. So, if God can have a reason that we don't understand or can't anticipate, then we can explain why certain evil things occur. And of course, there's many other theodicies, freewill, several others. So, this is really strange that people take this view on God, and the Bible, and their theology, when it's so contradicted by experience all around them. People get sick, people die. And they go along just ignoring all that.

MELISSA:

Yes, you have to ignore it. The reason why is because your mind matters. What you say and what you believe matters. So, you have to ignore it, in order to make it real. And it's very strange. It's very odd. And, you know, the one thing I want people to really understand and get is that a lot of this would be fixed. All of this would be fixed if one thing was held as the standard, the Bible. Because for them, it's experience.

FRANK:

Okay, so experience goes over the Bible. They're using their experience to interpret the Bible rather than using the Bible to interpret their experience.

MELISSA:

Yes, exactly. And it's not just Bethel. It's people that are, New Age, New Thought, whatever. That is their truth. My experience is my Bible, I had one woman tell me. And that's exactly how they would see that. And so, I think that's the cusp. I think that's the spearhead.

FRANK:

It seems also it's more of the authority of self over the authority of God.

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MELISSA:

You're exactly right.

FRANK:

It's almost narcissism, theological narcissism. That somehow, I get to control everything. There's no room for God if I have a particular thing I want. If I do all the right things, I'm going to get it.

MELISSA:

Exactly. Yeah.

FRANK:

Wow. Melissa, it's been delightful having you on and having you on in person.

MELISSA:

Yea, this is great. Way better than online.

FRANK:

Yeah, we're going to do it again at some point. Ladies and gentlemen, check out MelissaDougherty.co. It's been great. Check out her YouTube channel as well. You'll also see her on the CrossExamined YouTube channel quite a bit because she's making a lot of great videos for us as part of the CAT, the CrossExamined Apologetics Team. It's been great being with you and great being with you all out there. Lord willing, we'll see you next week. God bless.

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