

Is God Real? Exploring the Ultimate Question of Life | with Lee Strobel

(December 29, 2023)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, after doing this program for more than 15 years, you know, you can boil everything down to one question. And the question is, is God real? Because if God is real, then everything is different because we have a purpose. There is a purpose. There is an eternity. Of course, if God isn't real, then none of this ultimately matters anyway. So, is God real? Well, the man that really brought apologetics over the past 25 years into the mainstream, is Lee Strobel.

I mean, his book 'Case for Christ,' ladies and gentlemen is still, if not the top, one of the top two or three apologetics books still sold. And why? Because Lee knows how to write. Lee knows how to interview. Lee knows how to put a book together that will take the most difficult academic arguments and bring them down to the lay level. And he's done it again. The new book that he has just written is called 'Is God Real?: Exploring the Ultimate Question of Life.' And we have him here for the entire hour. Here he is, ladies and gentlemen. The great Lee Strobel. Lee, how are you?

LEE:

Well, thanks for that introduction. That was awesome. I'm doing great, Frank. Thanks for asking.

FRANK:

I know you just came out of a little sickness. I'm kind of in the middle of it right now. So, it's good to see you recovered. So maybe I will as well.

LEE:

You'll be fine. It'll take a while. I did lose 30 pounds. So, that's sort of the Romans 8:28 aspect of it. Yes, I was very sick. But hey, I lost 30 pounds. [Laughter]

FRANK:

That's right. You were supposed to do this interview like two months ago when the book came out. And you weren't feeling well at the time. But I'm glad you're back. And the book is doing well. In fact, you were just talking before the show started that it's a best seller again, right?

LEE:

Yeah, it just hit the bestseller list. Very, very grateful for that.

FRANK:

Now, how is this book different from the others? I mean, just for our listeners. Most of our listeners probably know who you are. But you've done the 'The Case for Christ.' That was the first one, 'Case for Creator', 'Case for Faith,' 'Case for Miracles,' 'Case for Grace.' I mean, you



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do all these great case books, where you interview the best scholars in the world, and you make them understandable to everyone. But how is this one different Lee?

LEE:

Well, you know, this was the only book I've ever done, where the publisher came to me. They said, we have noticed an interesting phenomenon. I said, what? They said, our tech people have noticed that 200 times a second, around the clock, someone on planet Earth is typing into a computer search engine, basically, the question, is God real?

FRANK:

Two hundred times a second?

LEE:

Two hundred times a second around the cloud.

FRANK:

Wow.

LEE:

And I that's what I said, wow. So, if there's that much curiosity, if there's that much interest, my goodness there's a whole generation out there seeking answers. And so, I decided to put this book together, drawing on some of my previous stuff, adding new material, new interviews, and so forth. And you're right, I see my contribution to the kingdom as kind of a conduit, you know? I'm not a scholar. So, I go to scholars. I go to these brilliant people who write these books that nobody understands because they're so brilliant, and who wrestle with these big issues. And I'm trained as a journalist.

And so, it's natural for me to ask the tough questions I had when I was an atheist, and then other questions that other people are asking, and kind of be, as you say, that conduit that, I think the old phrase is put the cookies on the bottom shelf, someone who can explain what these brilliant people are saying. So, I don't have to be brilliant. I just have to find brilliant people and interview them. And so, I've really enjoyed that through the years. I've gotten to meet some incredible thinkers, and scholars, and experts.

And so, many of those I've interviewed in this book. So, I have the same format as my other books where I go out and interview these scholars on these really tough questions. And I look at the evidence. What is the affirmative evidence that God is real? And then what are the answers to the biggest objections to that?

FRANK:

Yeah, and as I look at this book, and I'm reading through it right now. I've read several sections already. This book seems to be almost a compilation of all the previous books, or many of the previous books. Because you're not just covering 'The Case for Christ.' You're covering 'Case

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for the Creator' in this one. You're covering Jesus, obviously. You're covering some challenges to the Christian faith. Like in 'Case for Faith,' you covered a lot of challenges. If God, why evil? Well, you're doing that here as well. You're doing it in a very compact, succinct way. And it seems to me there are two great objections to Christianity, or to God existing. One is, if God actually exists, why is there evil? And the second is, if He does exist, why is He so hidden? And you deal with that in this as well, Lee. Why did you decide to go down that road in this book?

LEE:

Well, I thought, you know, after I built the affirmative case from science, from cosmology, physics, and biochemistry, and then from history, the resurrection and so forth in a very interesting chapter, by the way, maybe we can talk about later called 'The Apologetics Pyramid' that I deal with. After I did that, I thought, okay. Well, there's an affirmative case for God being real. But people have questions. People have doubts.

And what are the two biggest ones? And as you and I were talking before we began, it seems like the two biggest objections these days are exactly what you said. If God is real, why is there suffering? And if God is real, why does He seem so hidden? And so, I interviewed people on those topics that tried to say, you know, what? The affirmative evidence is, I think, powerful and persuasive. And I don't think these objections rise to the level of negating that affirmative case for God being real.

FRANK:

Let's talk a little bit about, you start with Dr. William Lane Craig. You and I both are friendly with Bill. He's just an amazing apologist, philosopher, theologian. In fact, he's debated more atheists than anyone in the past, say 35 years. And I think you set up one of his first debates, didn't you? Wasn't that Willow Creek or something?

LEE:

Frank, that is so funny you mentioned that because we're moving into a new house. We've downsized here in Texas. And I'm going through some old stuff, trying to get rid of stuff. And I actually found, hold on. I'm going to show it to you. I don't know if you can see it. This is the flyer we put together back in the early 90's with atheism versus Christianity, with William Lane Craig versus Frank Zindler? And we did this event. Mark Middleburg and I put this on. Nobody was doing debates back then.

FRANK:

Was it in the 90's? Or was it the 80's? When was it? I think it was in 1985.

LEE:

Yeah, something like that. I just have the date here. It doesn't say the year. But the funny thing was, we had a turnout for that debate, because my friend at the time was one of the most famous atheists in America. He was a national spokesman for American Atheists Incorporated. And he told me. He said, you know, Strobel, you Christians are all alike. I said, what do you

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mean? He said, oh, you will present the case for Christ. But you'll never give the case against God and let people make up their own mind. I said, oh, yeah? We're going to find the smartest atheist in the world and the smartest Christian in the world, and we'll have a debate. And he said, you wouldn't do that. And I said, oh, yeah? We shook hands. And my first thought was, I probably should have got permission from the senior pastor before I agreed to this. The media went nuts in Chicago over this thing.

When we opened the doors on the night of the debate, we had 7734 people show up. People ran down the aisles to get to see. When's the last time you saw someone run into a church? We had overflow. In fact, we had 117 radio stations literally coast to coast broadcasting it live. And so, we did this debate. We had people vote, what was your spiritual condition when you came in? Who won the debate? And what's your spiritual condition as you leave? Initially, we just took the ballots of people who came in as atheists, agnostics, skeptics, non-believers. Just among that group, 84% said the case for Christ was by far the most compelling. Nobody became an atheist.

FRANK:

Amazing. Well, we're going to talk about the evidence for a creator put forth by Dr. William Lane Craig and Lee Strobel's new book, 'Is God Real?' You're not going to want to miss it. It's a fabulous read. You've got to get it. 'Is God Real?' We're back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

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 never going to hear 'Is God Real?' on NPR. My guest is New York Times best-selling author Lee Strobel. That's the only place the New York Times is actually a phrase you want to utter when you're talking about a best-selling author like Lee Strobel, who has written another great book, 'Is God Real?: Exploring the Ultimate Question of Life.' And just before the break, we had talked about the debate he had set up between Frank Zindler and William Lane Craig back in either the late 80's or early 90's at Willow Creek Church. And Lee, you had just become a Christian, what in 81? Is that right? 1981 or so?

LEE:

Yes, November 8, 1981.

FRANK:

And, by the way, friends, if you don't know, there's a movie out on Lee's life called 'The Case for Christ.'

LEE:

Yeah, it's free on Amazon Prime.

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FRANK:

Amazon Prime. Yeah, get that. Check that out. We're in the last days here of 2023. What a great kind of real Christmas movie you could watch, and that is 'The Case for Christ.' It's very well done. But just before the break, we started talking about Bill Craig, who has really brought the cosmological argument, the Kalam Cosmological Argument into the modern day. So, what does he have to say in the chapter you have on a creator, Lee? I know we can't go into a lot of detail, but maybe 10,000 feet.

LEE:

This is so powerful. If I were still an atheist today, and all I had to go on was this argument for the existence of God, I would be convinced that God exists. It's just my personal valuation. But the argument is very simple. Whatever begins to exist has a cause. Virtually every scientist in the world now concedes the universe at some point in the past began to exist. Therefore, the universe must have a cause behind it. Well, what kind of a cause can bring the universe into existence?

Well, first, it must be transcendent, because it was separate from creation. It must be spirit or immaterial, because it existed before the physical world. It must be eternal or timeless, because it existed before physical time came into being. It must be powerful, given the immensity of the creation event. It must be smart, given the precision of the creation event. It must be personal, because He had to make the decision to create. It must be creative, given my goodness, just look at the cosmos. It must be loving or caring, because He crafted so carefully a wonderful environment for us to flourish in. And then the scientific principle Occam's Razor tells us there will be just one Creator. So, what do we got? Transcendent, spirit, eternal, powerful, smart, personal, creative, loving, unique. That is a description of the God of the Bible.

And so, it rules out polytheistic religions where people believe in many gods, if there's just one God. It rules out pantheistic religions because the Creator must be separate from creation, and pantheism believes that everything is God. It rules out the universe being cyclical, as some people once believed. It rules out the idea that the universe was static, and always existed. We now know it began to exist at some point in the past. So, this one argument, which actually has its roots in medieval Islamic theology and philosophy, I think in and of itself, if that's all I had to go on, I would say that's enough to convince me that there is a God. And by the way, the description of that God matches the description of the God of the Bible.

FRANK:

Yeah, I agree with you, Lee. All the arguments, when I go to college campuses, this is the one I start with. And it gives you more attributes of God than any other argument. You know, you mentioned six or seven of them right there. You at least get spaceless, timeless, immaterial, powerful, personal, and intelligent, just from one argument. And you don't know if it's Jesus yet. You've got to look at the evidence from, and you cover that in the book. Again, the book is, 'Is God Real?' by Lee Strobel. You've still got to see if Jesus has risen from the dead to see if this is the God of the Bible. But you get several attributes of this being from one argument. Now,

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how does Bill Craig set this up? What's some of the evidence he gives that the universe had a beginning?

LEE:

Well, we have evidence from philosophy that says that an infinite regress would be impossible. But mainly, we have a series of scientific discoveries just over the last 50 or 80 years that tell us that the universe has been expanding since its inception. And if you run the clock backwards, it goes back to a beginning point. In fact, one of the most famous cosmologists Alexander Vilenkin of Tufts University, he and two other cosmologists have come up with a theorem that says that any universe that is expanding on average through its history like ours, must have had a beginning. That even applies if we have a multiverse.

In other words, if our universe ends up being just a tiny part of an even bigger multiverse, that multiverse must have had a beginning. And so, people have tried to shoot this down. People have argued against it, and I cite some of those arguments and refute them in the book. But I think the evidence for the beginning of the universe, well, it's convinced virtually every scientist in the world. I mean, as Alexander Vilenkin, said, all scientists virtually now concur that the universe had a beginning at some point in the past. So, from secular science, we have this evidence. And you know, that's not the only area of science where we've had discoveries in the last 50 or so years.

The other one that I give in the book is the fine tuning of the universe. The fact that this could not have happened by accident or by coincidence. But you know, the universe has 50-100 parameters, sort of the numbers that govern the operation of the universe are so finely tuned on a razor's edge, that it defies the explanation that this could have happened by chance. And I give examples of that. One of my favorite ones involves gravity, because we all know what gravity is. And if you were to picture a ruler that goes across the entire universe, 15 billion light years wide, a universe a ruler broken down in one inch increments, that represents the plausible range along which the force of gravity could have been set. And yet, it's set at the exact right place so that intelligent life can exist.

Well, what if we were to change it? What if we were to move it one inch compared to the 15 billion light years with the universe. If you did that, intelligent life would be impossible anywhere in the universe. And that's just one of the parameters. There are 50 to 100 of them. In fact, there's over 300 conditions which must be met so that you can have a life-sustaining planet. And so, the fine-tuning argument, which again, is just an argument that's developed over the last 50 years or so because of discoveries that people have made in physics. Those two arguments by themselves, I think, are enough to convince an open-minded person that God is real.

FRANK:

In fact, at least a few of these prominent atheists have admitted that for them is the hardest one to answer, the fine-tuning.

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LEE:

Christopher Hitchens said that.

FRANK:

Yeah, Hitchens said that. He said it was hard to answer. Of course, Hitchens didn't really care about arguments.

LEE:

Well, that's true. But he had a good time doing it.

FRANK:

Oh, yea he did. In my couple of debates with him, it was interesting. When you watch the debate with Hitchens, you go, I like this guy. You know, he's kind of a provocateur. But when you read the debate, like you didn't have any of his rhetorical flair there, you just read it. You go, what's this guy talking about? This has got nothing to do with the subject.

LEE:

Exactly. And you know, there's a famous debate that people can watch online between William Lane Craig and Christopher Hitchens. It was done at Biola University. Let me quote to you the atheist evaluation of that debate. The atheist commentator said, William Lane Craig, the Christian, spanked Christopher Hitchens like a foolish child. That's the atheist evaluation of that debate. [Laughter]

FRANK:

It's great. Now, you have a chapter in here on the creation of the universe and you have the chapter on the fine tuner. You interview Dr. Michael Strauss, who I believe teaches at Oklahoma University, correct? And you've got DNA Demands a Designer from Steven Meyer. You've also got Mike Licona here for the resurrection and Doug Groothuis, Experiencing God. That's an important chapter. I read that this morning. But let me ask you about, you have a chapter in here, Lee. 'Which God is Real?', an interview with Chad Meister, who's also a PhD. Tell us about that chapter. That's an interesting chapter.

LEE:

You know, this dates back many, many years ago when I was a teaching pastor in Chicago at a church. And Chad Meister was a volunteer in our apologetics ministry. I think he was getting his master's degree at the time and went on to get his PhD. But one day, I was preaching on the resurrection. And afterwards, I was greeting people, and a man came up to me and he said, I'm an atheist. What you said today, was very persuasive. very powerful. And I'm wondering if we could get together and I could have a conversation with you in the next couple of weeks?

And I said, I'd love to, but I can't. I'm flying to Europe tomorrow. I'm going to be gone for several weeks, but my friend Chad would be glad to meet with you. And Chad came up and I said, hey,

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would you meet with this guy? And he said sure. So, Chad goes home. And he says, okay, I'm going to meet with this atheist. How can I present the case for Christianity in a unique and a systematic way to this skeptic? And he came up with what he calls The Apologetics Pyramid. And the idea is, you know how a pyramid is shaped. He said, I'm going to start with the broadest question, and then narrow it so that the peak becomes the Gospel itself. And he looks at the broadest question at the bottom of the base of the pyramid, which is, what is truth?

Well, we know what truth is. Truth is that which corresponds to reality. That's the correspondence theory of truth. And so, he analyzes what is truth versus opinion, and preferences, and so forth. And then he goes to worldviews. And there's only three possible worldviews. Atheism, there is no God. Pantheism, everything is God. Or theism, there is a God. And so, he analyzes those from two perspectives. Are they livable and are they logical? Does the philosophy internally contradict itself and therefore cannot be true? Or is it not livable if we were to really apply it? And so, he shows through this interview in the book how pantheism and atheism are truly, they don't live up to livability, and they don't live up to logic. And yet, theism does.

And then from there, he goes to revelation to the Bible, can that be trusted? From there he goes to the resurrection. Is it true that Jesus returned from the dead and thus proved He's the Son of God? And then the peak of the Gospel. And so, he meets with this guy. At seven o'clock, they have dinner at Chad's apartment. They begin going through the apologetics pyramid. By 11pm, that atheist is now a Christian. And so, in this book, Chad walks through this pyramid. And it's just kind of a unique way of dealing with the evidence and making the case for the truth of the gospel versus other worldviews.

FRANK:

Yeah, you're making a logical case from the ground up.

LEE:

Yeah, exactly. I've turned it into a message that I've delivered at churches. And it's a great way to start at ground zero and kind of build systematically a case for the truth of Christianity.

FRANK:

Absolutely. We're talking to Lee Strobel, his brand-new book, 'Is God Real?' He interviews some of the top scholars in the world on the evidence for Christianity, and also deals with some of the biggest objections like if there is a good God, why is there evil? And why is God so hidden? Why doesn't He just show up and clear up all the confusion for us? Well, we're going to get into that right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. Our website is CrossExamined.org. Back in two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

The final show of 2023, ladies and gentlemen. Start your 2024 off right. We are actually running the brand-new 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist' course beginning January

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15. And if you want the version for a sixth to eighth grader, it's called 'Let's Get Real.' Just go to CrossExamined.org. Click on Online Courses. You'll see both of them there. 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist', I'll be your primary instructor. And if you take the premium version, we're going to do at least six live Q&A Zoom sessions.

And then Shanda Fulbright, who is a real schoolteacher, is going to teach your kids, sixth to eighth grade, fifth to ninth grade, anywhere in there. The same kind of material, except it's called 'Let's Get Real.' So, those two courses are running here in the beginning of January. And by the way, my guest, the great Lee Strobel, and here he is again, ladies and gentlemen. He also has started a new apologetics school called Colorado Christian. Tell us a little bit about that, Lee, before we go back to the book 'Is God Real?'

LEE:

Sure. I got together 40 PhDs, and we created 91 courses on apologetics and evangelism, and started the center at Colorado Christian University. It's called The Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics. And we use the word applied apologetics because we're not trying to create ivory tower academics. We're trying to create people, Frank, like you who are out doing it or putting it into action, writing letters to the editor, doing blogs or whatever. In fact, one of our early graduates in our master's degree is J. Warner Wallace's son, Jimmy Wallace, who's also a detective out in California. Jimmy got his master's through us. And so, he does a bunch of YouTube videos on the evidence for God.

So, we've got hundreds of students. You can get a master's degree. It's accredited. It's fully online, so you can do it from your home. You can get a bachelor's degree, or you can get the certificate where it's not academic. But if you take five of them, you get a certificate confirming that you've achieved this level. And again, all online, all accredited. The certificates aren't accredited academically, but the other degrees are. And if people go to StrobelCenter.com, all the information is there. But we've got hundreds of students now. We hope to get thousands of students. We got all this capacity because it's all online.

FRANK:

So, Lee, can someone right out of high school go there?

LEE:

Yes. You can get a master's degree. Get a four year degree. Yeah, absolutely.

FRANK:

Well, friends, let's just point this out. This degree that you would get from Colorado Christian would be infinitely better than a degree from Harvard University, given what's going on right now. I mean, it's just ridiculous what's going on at Harvard now. In any event, let's go back to the book, 'Is God Real?' And you're covering two of the most difficult objections to Christianity. One is the problem of evil. And the second is the hiddenness of God. Let's talk about the

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hiddenness for a while. That is kind of a strange question. You know, if God exists, and He wants us to trust in Him, why isn't He more obvious? What do you say to that?

LEE:

Yeah, it's a great question. And you I know, have done programs on this. You interviewed Jon Steingard, who was the lead singer for a Christian rock band called Hawk Nelson, who deconstructed "his faith" and turned away from Christianity. And one of the main reasons is this hiddenness argument. In fact, I quote you in the book, Frank. Because I talk about Jon Steingard. And you interviewed him. And very interestingly, in the interview, he concedes. You said to him, now this argument for the hiddenness of God, that doesn't negate all the affirmative evidence we have for the existence of God. He said, oh, yeah. You're right about that. Well, that's a huge concession. Because if we have all this affirmative evidence, I don't think the hiddenness argument, it manages to deconstruct at all.

So, what is the hiddenness argument? Now, let me read to you what the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes it. Number one, there are people who are capable of relating personally to God, but who through no fault of their own, fail to believe. Number two, if there is a personal God who is unsurpassingly great, then there would be no such people. Number three, therefore, there is no such God. So, as you were saying, if God were real, He would make Himself so obvious that nobody could deny that He exists. Well, I interviewed Kenneth Samples. Do you know Ken?

FRANK:

Yes, I do. Ken works with Hugh Ross and Fuzz Rana at Reasons to Believe.

LEE:

Right. And so, I interviewed him on this topic because he had written an article. And in the article, he did something very interesting. I don't know if you know this, but Ken was an aspiring professional baseball player in his youth. He was a catcher. And so, he kind of likened this argument to baseball, to a catcher in a pitcher. And he says, the pitcher is God, and the catcher is us. And he said, where does the problem lie? Does the problem lie with the pitcher? Or does the problem lie with the catcher? And he says, you know, biblically, the problem really lies with the catcher. It lies with us. Because Romans tells us that there is sufficient evidence in the cosmos for us to see in nature and so forth, to know that God exists.

In fact, it says we can clearly see that God exists so that no one is beyond excuse. And yet, Romans also says that we tend to suppress that. Why? Because we don't want there to be a God. We want to be God. We want to run our own universe. We don't want somebody telling us what to do. We want our morality, not God's, and so forth. And so, actually, the Greek imagery there when it talks about suppressing this, is the imagery of a pedal. And so, our awareness of God rises up and it's like a pedal we push down. We suppress it, and then it rises up again, and we suppress it again. We push down the pedal. That's the imagery in the Greek that the Bible has. And so, really the issue is more with us.

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Because the question is not, does God want us to know that He exists? That's not His goal. Even the demons know that He exists, and they shutter. The goal is we would not only know that He exists, but we would yield our life to Him, we would surrender our life to Him, that we would follow Him, that we would receive His free gift of forgiveness and eternal life and become adopted into His family forever. That's the goal. And so, wouldn't you think that a God who is omnipotent, and omniscient, who knows everything, would know the exact right amount that He should make His existence obvious to people?

In other words, He walks a fine line. He has to make the awareness of Him obvious enough to people who want to find Him, and yet hidden enough to those who don't want to find Him so that we really have free will. He's not going to overwhelm our freewill. We can make a free choice as to whether or not we want to follow Him. Another thing that Ken pointed out. He said, look at the times in history when God made His existence painfully obvious, so obvious that nobody could possibly deny it. And I'm thinking of when He guided the Israelites out of Egypt, and when He parted the Red Sea. I mean, how could anybody deny that God exists seeing that actually take place? They still fell into apostasy.

And so, the fact that God made Himself so obviously apparent, did not mean that they bent their knee and followed Him. But they fell into apostasy again. So, why would we think that if God were to write in the sky, I exist, that we would fall on our knees and receive Him as our Lord and Savior? When, in the example of ancient Israel tells us, people fell into apostasy anyway. So, there's a lot of interesting arguments and reasoning that you have to look at. And I think Ken does a really good job in the book of pulling it all together.

FRANK:

Yeah, he does. I'm reminded of something Peter Atkins said. You're familiar with Peter Atkins, a pretty vociferous atheist. He was asked in a debate once, if Jesus were to appear to him, what would he do? He said, I'd call my psychiatrist. Right? [Laughter] It's like, there's no amount of evidence that would convince him because he doesn't want to be convinced. So, that would be one extreme. But did Ken Samples say anything, Lee, about supposedly the people who are not as adamantly against God as say, someone like Peter Atkins? Somebody who is apparently seeking God, but still just can't seem to find him. Why isn't God more obvious, then?

LEE:

Yeah, let me get to that in a second. But I want to jump on what you just said about Atkins, because there's a famous quote I use in the book from the atheist, Thomas Nagel. And he said, it's not just that I do not believe in God and naturally hope that I'm right in my belief, it's that I hope there is no God. I do not want there to be a God. I do not want the universe to be like that. So, there are people who really, whether they acknowledge it or not, are suppressing the evidence of God. And so, you had just raised another question. What was it again?

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FRANK:

Yeah, the question was, I'm not talking about somebody like Thomas Nagel or Peter Atkins. They're really against God. But what about the people who say, I really want to find Him, but I can't. Why isn't He more obvious?

LEE:

Great question. You know, several years ago, my daughter is a novelist. She's had five novels published, books of fiction. And several years ago, she said to me, dad. You've written all these books. You should write a novel, like a John Grisham legal thriller. And I said, okay, I'll give it a try. So, I wrote a novel. It was a total bomb. Nobody ever read my novel. It was a disaster. But anyway, my point is, if you picked up my novel, which is called 'The Ambition. It's not even in print anymore. But if you picked up my novel, and you read halfway through the novel, and you shut it, and you said that Strobels, he's a terrible novelist. He didn't tie up the plot. He didn't resolve the tension between the characters. He didn't bring everything to fruition. And I would say, wait a second. You didn't finish the book. You've got to finish the book.

And so, I would say to someone who says, I'm sincerely interested in finding God. You know what, the fact that you haven't found Him yet doesn't mean you're not going to find Him. The book of Hebrews in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament, both say if you sincerely seek God, you're going to find Him. And so, to those who want to know, 'Is God Real?', I would suggest doing what I did when I was an atheist. My wife became a Christian. And so, I was going to investigate the faith to try to liberate her from this cult that she got involved in.

But I was sincerely interested in finding the truth. And so, you know what I did? I prayed. And my prayer was, God, I don't believe you're there. In fact, I'm convinced you're not there. But if you are, I want to meet you. You've got nothing to lose but 15 seconds if you pray a prayer like that. But if you're sincerely interested in finding God, I would suggest you pray that prayer. God loves to answer prayers like that.

And so, I would say the fact that you haven't found Him yet does not mean you're not going to find Him. I'd also say that some people need to explore the question of whether or not there are some hidden psychological barriers to them finding God. You know, if you look at the famous atheists of history: Camus, Nietzsche, Freud, Voltaire, Wells, every single one of them had a father who died when they were young, divorced their mother when they were young, or with whom they had a terrible relationship. And the implication is if your earthly father has hurt you or disappointed you, you don't really want to know a heavenly Father. And so, you tend to suppress evidence of Him, even though you're not even aware of it.

FRANK:

A lot more with Lee Strobel. His new book 'Is God Real?: Exploring the Ultimate Question of Life.' You need to pick it up. It's a very easy and compelling read. So, check it out. 'Is God Real?' by Lee Strobel. He'll be my guest in the final segment. Don't go anywhere.

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to be an **ATHEIST**

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You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist on the American Family Radio Network with me, Frank Turek. Our website is CrossExamined.org. And as I've mentioned in the previous shows here, this is listener supported radio. Ninety-three percent of everything we do at CrossExamined.org is funded by you. So, as you're making your year-end donations, please consider CrossExamined.org. All of your donations will go 100% toward ministry, 0% toward buildings. We are completely virtual.

And as you know, we are starting a new Kingdom AI apologetics project where we're trying to translate the best apologetics material and putting them into the top 30 languages around the world. If you hadn't heard about this, you can listen to one of our previous podcasts. Or you can just go to CrossExamined.org. Click on Donate. You'll see a four-minute video where I explain what we're doing. And you'll see an avatar of me speaking four different languages that I don't speak. Because AI is the way forward. We're going to use AI for good. I know a lot of people are worried about AI, but we're going to use it for good. So, check out that four-minute video on our CrossExamined.org Donate page. And if you want to get out on the ground floor of the biggest expansion of apologetics in history because it's technology driven, then please consider donating here at the end of the year.

I'm talking to my friend Lee Strobel. His brand-new book 'Is God Real?' is just as good, if not better, than all the other great case books he's written. Even though case is not in this title, it is a book where he is again interviewing the top scholars in the world on some of the top arguments for Christianity, and even addressing those against it. So, you're going to want to pick this up. Anyone can read it. 'Is God Real?: Exploring the Ultimate Question of Life.' Hey, Lee, we have kind of seen a waning anyway, according to surveys of belief in God in America. What do you account for that? Why do you think that is? What's going on?

LEE:

We're really seeing a clashing of statistics that seem to point in two different directions at the same time. First of all, you're right. The main statistics from Gallup show that back in 1967, when I was a freshman in high school, 98% of American adults believed in God, 98%. Today, the number is 81%. That's the lowest in history. So, you look at that and you go, my goodness. What's going on? And yet, at the same time, three out of four American adults say they want to grow spiritually. And nearly half of American adults say they're more open to God today than they were before the pandemic. In fact, I have a friend. Do you know Shane Pruitt?

FRANK:

No, I don't. Who's Shane?

LEE:

Shane's a great guy. His ministry is to travel the country and to speak to young people, college and high school kids, about God. And he does these big events all over the country. He's just a great guy. And he said something very interesting to me. He said, Lee, I have seen more

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teenagers come to faith in Jesus Christ in the last three years, than in the previous 18 years of ministry combined. And so, it's interesting, isn't it? We're seeing these two things happening. We're seeing these statistics showing that overall belief in God has gone down. And we're seeing that there's receptivity to God. And as I mentioned earlier, 200 people a second typing into computer search engines, is God real? So, there's this curiosity and so forth. So, we see two things happening.

Why do we see the percentage of people who believe in God go down? I think one reason is, people are more willing these days to admit that they don't believe in God. You know, when I was an atheist back in the 1970's and 1980's, you didn't go around telling people you're an atheist. That was like admitting you're a pedophile. I mean, people would look down their nose at you and just reject you. Well, nowadays, it's the cool thing. And that's why we see twice as many members of Generation Z say they're atheists as older people. It's the in thing to be. It is harder, I think, to come out as an evangelical Christian today in many cities, than it is to come out as being gay. You're going to get attacked. And so, I think it's easier for people to say that.

We're seeing, of course, the internet has a big impact. We're seeing arguments against Christianity on the internet that have been refuted by the church for years, and years, and years. But that's not mentioned. And for instance, one of the arguments is that Christianity is a copycat religion, that Christianity just copied from earlier mythologies, like Mithras and these old myths, and that's where they got the idea of a dying and rising God, and things like that. Well, that was raised in the 1800's by German skeptical theologians and historians. It was completely disproven by Christians in the in the 20th century. And yet, it's been resurrected now. Once again, bringing up all these old arguments that have been long since refuted. So, I think that's a factor as well.

But here's the deal, Frank. And this is why what you do is so important. I was talking to a guy who said he has a six year old granddaughter, who goes to public schools. And she was on the playground at recess. And the other kids were taunting her and making fun of her because she still believes in God. Oh, you believe in fairy tales. You believe in make believe. Our children, our grandchildren, are going to be challenged in their faith in this increasingly skeptical and even hostile world than older generations were never challenged. So, we need apologetics, evidence for the faith, reasons for why we believe what we believe.

We need to train the parents and grandparents, so that they can help raise this next generation with confidence that we've got at least 20 lines of evidence and arguments that point powerfully and persuasively toward the truth of Christianity, that it is a reasonable faith. God is a reasonable God, and He created us in His image. He's a logical God, and we are logical. And the logic of science, and history, and philosophy points toward the truth of Christianity. And that's why apologetics is so important to train this generation and generations to come. In not just what we believe, but why we believe it.

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FRANK:

Yeah, it's really interesting in the chapter you have on suffering. you interview Peter Kreeft, Dr. Peter Kreeft. And he makes the point in here, which is a great point, that let's just say evil is an argument against God. We know it isn't ultimately, and you explain why in the book. I don't have time to get into it right now. But what Kreeft says in here is, atheists have to answer all 20 arguments for Christianity, whereas we have to answer just one. You know, the problem of evil, which can be answered as you point out. But let me just jump ahead, Lee, because we've just got a few minutes left. There are really two big apologetic questions. Does God exist? And Did Jesus rise from the dead? And if the answer to those questions is yes, Christianity is true. So, let's say you've just got 60 seconds to show somebody that Jesus rose from the dead. What would you say?

LEE:

I'd say, number one, that He was truly dead after being crucified. Even the Journal of the American Medical Association affirms that clearly, He was dead after being crucified, even before the wound to His side was inflicted. Secondly, we have early report of His resurrection, including named witnesses, and groups of eyewitnesses, that's been dated back by scholars to within months of his death. This is much too early to be a legend that developed over time. Third, we have an empty tomb that even the opponents of Jesus admitted was empty. And then finally, we have eyewitnesses. We've got nine ancient sources inside and outside the New Testament, confirming and corroborating the conviction of the disciples, that they encountered the risen Jesus. That is an avalanche of historical data.

FRANK:

But Lee, they're going to say, but you're using the bible to prove the Bible, Lee. You can't do that. That's circular. What do you say to that?

LEE:

Two things. Number one, I'm not. I'm quoting sources outside the Bible, the Journal of the American Medical Association, for example, a secular peer-reviewed scientific medical journal. And number two, I'm not just taking the Bible at face value. I'm giving evidence that the historical evidence in the Bible stands up to scrutiny. And then we have multiple sources that confirm the essential elements of Jesus' life, teachings, miracles, death, and especially His resurrection.

FRANK:

So, is it fair to say that when scholars look at the documents, which we now consider to be the New Testament, they're not looking at them as some sort of inspired text. They just want to see if these documents appear to be telling the general, historical truth. And how do they discover that it really is the general, historical truth? What are some tests that they use?

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LEE:

You use the same test that you would use to test any ancient writing, whether it's by Josephus or Tacitus. You can take those same historical tests and apply them to the text of the New Testament to try and determine, is it telling me the truth? And, you know, when I was at Yale Law School, one of my heroes was the greatest lawyer who ever lived, Sir Lionel Luckhoo. And Sir Lionel is in the Guinness Book of World Records of winning more cases as a defense attorney than anybody in history. He was knighted twice by Queen Elizabeth, and he was a skeptic about the resurrection, just like I was at the time when I was an atheist. And yet, he investigated the evidence.

This is a man who knows what evidence is and isn't. Who can take an airtight case against his client and point out all the flaws in it. He spent years investigating. I'll recite to you one sentence he wrote to summarize his conclusion. He says, I say unequivocally, that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming, that it compels acceptance by proof, which leaves absolutely no room for doubt. This from the most successful lawyer who ever lived. By the way, I told that story at a church in California and a woman came up to me and said, I'm Sir Lionel's sister. She showed me some of his private papers that he had written down notes during his investigation. He later left law and became a full-time evangelist.

FRANK:

Wow, that's amazing. Lee, we've only got a minute left. Let's make sure everyone knows about the book. It's called 'Is God Real?' Pick it up at Amazon, wherever you get books. How about you personally, Lee? If people want to follow you and what you're doing, what's your website? Where do they go?

LEE:

Go to LeeStrobel.com. My information is there. And also, there's a link and it'll take you to some free excerpts from the book if you want to kind of get a sense of what it's like.

FRANK:

Oh, yeah, it's well worth picking up, ladies and gentlemen. And for people you know who are skeptical, or maybe they're thinking about Christianity, this is certainly the book to get. It's an easy read. It's got the best scholars in it. It's written by Lee, who knows how to write. He's a journalist. Pick it up. 'Is God Real?' And for those of you that are part of the CrossExamined Community, we'll have a few more minutes with Lee.

So, if you're not part of the CrossExamined Community you want to join. Just go to CrossExamined.org. Click on Community. You'll see it there. And thanks so much for being with us, ladies and gentlemen. It's been a great year, 2023. Thanks to Lee for being with me here. Check out the book, 'Is God Real?' And also, don't forget. The online courses are starting in a couple of weeks. Go to CrossExamined.org. Click on Online Courses. You will see them there. And Lord willing, we'll see you here next year.

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