

## Is Judging the Ultimate Sin? Unpacking the Chip & Joanna Gaines Controversy PLUS Q&A

(July 29, 2025)

### **FRANK:**

Did Jesus tell us never to judge? If he did tell us never to judge, how are we supposed to correct people who are in sin?

And how can we love people if we can't make a judgment and correct their wrong behavior? So, how do we judge rightly? And what's the difference between judging and being judgmental? Those questions we're going to dive into and a few others. And this was spurred on by what happened with Chip and Joanna Gaines a couple of weeks ago. I haven't had an opportunity to comment on this, but for those of you that haven't heard, Chip and Joanna Gaines are a very likable couple that for many years did that TV program 'Fixer Upper.' They're very fun.

They're very upbeat. They seem to have a great family. I really like them. I haven't seen their 'Fixer Upper' show in quite a while. It's no longer in production, of course. It's in reruns. But they've got this new network, as I understand it, called the Magnolia Network. And they had a program on that network that highlighted two men married to one another with two boys as their family. And the premise I think of the show is something like three couples go back, or three families go back to the 1800's, and they try and live without all the media that we have now, and all the comfort we have now.

And anyway, one of the three apparently is this couple, this same-sex married couple of men with two sons. And Christians came out online and basically pointed out that I don't think this is something you ought to be doing as a Christian couple, is trying to normalize same-sex relationships. And in fact, the same-sex couple on the program basically said that they're excited about being on the program to make their relationship and relationships like this more acceptable, more normal in American society.



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Anyway, Christians came out very hard, against Chip and Joanna. And I think probably in many cases they went over a line in their criticism. I mean, you can correct people without being an obnoxious scold. Okay? And I want to give Chip and Joanna the benefit of the doubt, but I'm also going to point out that I think what they're doing here is wrong. Anyway, what happened as a result of this is that Chip put out a tweet that went like this after all this criticism they got for doing this program. He said, and it's abbreviated, might be a little hard to understand.

But anyway, he said talk, ask questions, listen, and maybe even learn. Too much to ask of modern American Christian culture. Judge first, understand later, slash never. It's a sad Sunday when non-believers have never been confronted with hate or vitriol until they are introduced to the modern American Christian, unquote. So, that was his response.

And several people tried to ask, what I say, in some of them in a very kind way. Chip, that doesn't cut it. In fact, Beckett Cook, I don't know if you know who Beckett Cook is. Beckett Cook was a same sex attracted man for many years. He may still be as far as I know, but he was working in Hollywood in the Hollywood industry as a same sex attracted, actively gay man.

And at one point he was in a cafe somewhere and he saw a couple of Christians having lunch and they had their Bible on the table. And so, Beckett thought to himself, I'm going to go up and ask them what their Bible says about homosexuality. And they gave Beckett a very direct answer, a truthful answer about what it says about homosexual behavior. And it ultimately led to Beckett becoming a Christian. And so here-- And Beckett now, by the way, has his own podcast called 'The Beckett Cook Show.' He's very worth listening to.

He has some great insights. In fact, if you want a really great episode, go back. And I'm doing this from memory. I think it was back in April of 2023, he had Dr. Robert Gagnon on the show to talk about should Christians, if they're invited, go to a same-sex wedding. And Robert Gagnon is an amazing scholar on this issue. You need to watch that program if you or anybody else is thinking about going to a same-sex wedding.

Listen to that particular podcast. Anyway, I digress. Here's what Beckett said to Chip Gaines's tweet that I just read. He said, respectfully, Chip, that doesn't work. You can't platform a gay family on your show, further normalizing it, and cry foul. You are intentionally or

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unintentionally leading many astray. Of course we need to love our gay neighbors, but we also need to tell the truth.

This is how I was led to the Lord. Not by squishy Christians, but by loving Christians who told me the truth, unquote. Indeed, Beckett is correct. Love, by the way, does not mean approval. Every parent knows this. If you reflect on this, you know love does not mean approval. I mean, if you approve of everything your 13 year old wants to do, are you loving? No. You're unloving. You're enabling evil. And Beckett is claiming that if you tell people the truth, that is the right way to love people.

And he is correct. In fact, when Paul talks about love in 1 Corinthians 13, the passage that everybody reads at their wedding, but nobody obeys, or few of us obey anyway, he says, love does not rejoice in wrongdoing. Love rejoices in the truth. Love always protects. Love always perseveres. In other words, if you're going to love people, you're not going to affirm something that is sinful.

You're not going to affirm things that drive them further away from the Lord. In fact, something that could keep them out of the kingdom for eternity, as Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians, chapter 6. No, love doesn't mean approval. Love means you seek what's best for the other person according to the will of God. And affirming their sin doesn't do so. Normalizing their sin doesn't do so. And as I said before, we can do this without being an obnoxious scold.

Now, I don't think that Chip and Joanna are intentionally being evil. I just think they've been unwittingly influenced by the culture. And that culture, the culture we're in now, defines love as approval, defines disagreement as hate, and believes that judging is a sin. In fact, I'm reminded of what my colleague Natasha Crain writes in her excellent book, 'Faithfully Different.' She says that the modern mind, the modern secular way of thinking, and even many Christians adopt this way of thinking, and it appears that Chip and Joanna have as well, is to believe these four basic truths about life.

These are the four basic truths. Number one, happiness is the ultimate goal. Two, feelings are the ultimate guide. Three, judging is the ultimate sin. And number four, God is the ultimate guess. Happiness is the ultimate goal. Feelings are the ultimate guide. Judging is the ultimate

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sin, and God is the ultimate guess. In other words, we don't know whether God exists or not. So, don't tell me you know what he wants me to do. That's essentially what Natasha is saying here.

And why is judging the ultimate sin? Because if happiness is my goal and feelings are my guide, how can you judge my happiness or my feelings? Now, if you haven't figured this out yet, this way of thinking is from the pit of hell, okay? Because if we all followed our own happiness as our ultimate goal, I mean murdering people might make us happy. Committing adultery might make us happy, at least temporarily. Stealing might make us happy.

I mean there just a thousand different things that can make you happy. Taking drugs, double crossing people, embezzling from them. There's millions of different ways you could make yourself happy and sin at the same time, hurt other people at the same time. Feelings the ultimate guide? Man, if I trusted my feelings, I'd have been dead a long time ago. Feelings aren't the ultimate guide. Feelings might make life fun, but logic makes life safe.

You just can't follow your feelings without reason or without moral restraint. None of us would live very long. If we follow our feelings without reason, without moral restraint, we're going to wind up divorced, addicted, broken, alone, and probably prematurely dead. No, we can't follow our authentic self. We need to be saved from our authentic selves because our authentic selves are evil. They want what they want when they want it.

Our hearts are evil. Our hearts will tell us we need something we don't really need. And it will tell us, our hearts will tell us we need it right now. Judging is not the ultimate sin. Being judgmental is sinful. We'll get to that. But judging is required. And I'll explain why here in a minute. But God is not the ultimate guess. Without God, nothing would exist. I mean just the-- Let's put the word God aside for just a second.

And I want you to consider a different way of describing God. God is the source and sustainer of all things. Who is the source and sustainer of all things? Who is the source of the universe and sustainer of the universe? Who is the source of you and the sustainer of you? Who is the source and sustainer of the natural laws to keep the universe going?

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Who is the source of the laws of logic, and the laws of mathematics, and the laws of morality that says you ought not murder people, you ought to love them? Who is the source of all this? Who is the sustainer of reality? That's what we mean by God. Whoever that is. That's what we mean by God. There couldn't be an ultimate guess unless we were here to guess. And we wouldn't be here to guess unless there's a source and sustainer of all things.

And it turns out that source and sustainer is the God of the Bible. And there's evidence that He is the God of the Bible. As we point out many times on this program, and we do in the book, 'I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.' By the way, we also point out these truths in our other books, 'Stealing from God: Why Atheists Need God to Make Their Case', and even 'Hollywood Heroes: How Your Favorite Movies Reveal God.' I know a lot of people might not want to sit down and go point by point through the evidence for God and Jesus in the Bible.

Well, you can do so in a fun way by getting the book 'Hollywood Heroes: How Your Favorite Movies Reveal God.' Man, if you like movies, you're going to-- First of all, you're going to like the book 'Hollywood Heroes', and you're going to love Jesus because most of these movie heroes you read about or see anyway on the big screen, are modeled after the ultimate hero and that is Jesus. All right, I digress again. Happiness is not the ultimate goal. Feelings are not the ultimate guide. Judging is not the ultimate sin, and God is not the ultimate guess. But it seems like, unfortunately, Chip is-- Chip Gaines has fallen into this thinking.

Let me go back to what he said in his tweet where he pointed out that the modern day Christian is full of hate and vitriol. Now, Chip may have forgotten this, but seven or eight years ago there was a controversy around them. He hasn't forgotten this controversy, but what he said about it is what he might have forgotten. There was a controversy about his church down there in Texas, I guess in Waco that the media pointed out doesn't agree with same-sex behavior.

And what Chip said in a tweet was disagreement isn't hate. And let me echo that, Chip, you're absolutely right. You were absolutely right seven or eight years ago. Now, it seems like you're saying that it's hate to disagree with same-sex behavior by the tweet that you put out a couple of weeks ago. So, I'm a little bit confused because you got it right about seven or eight years ago when you said, hey, just because I may disagree with a particular behavior doesn't mean I

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hate the people. In fact, if you're going to love people, you have to hate some of the choices they make if they're pulling them further away from God, or if those choices are harmful to them or others.

Of course, you have to hate that and should be against that. But the disagreement isn't the hate. The disagreement shows that you love them, and you want what's best for them. Now, what about this idea of judging? Because you hear all the time, well, Jesus said, don't judge. Whenever people say that, I say, where does he say that? Well, he says it in Matthew, chapter seven, verse one. All right, when people say that you need to stop and ask them a question.

And the question is, is that all he says? Does he just say, judge not and he stops right there? No, he goes on. This is why, ladies and gentlemen, we have to point out that there are no verses in the Bible. There are no verses in the Bible. I mean, when were the chapter and verse divisions added to the Bible? About 500 years ago to help us navigate the text, which is important. It'd be hard to find your way around this big series of books we call the Bible. Because the Bible is not one book, by the way, ladies and gentlemen.

It's a library of books. But it would be hard to find your way around those books without numbers. The problem is we tend to think, if it's got a number in front of it, we can take it out and make it say whatever we want. We can't do that, ladies and gentlemen. We've got to read around the text to see what's going on. That's why I like to say there are no verses in the Bible. Now, it's important, as I say, to have these numbers. I mean, you couldn't go to church and have this big honking Bible, and your pastor has a big honking Bible, and he opens up this big honking Bible, and he says to the audience, let's go about 2/3 of the way in.

Let's see if we can find the same spot. No, that wouldn't work. So, you need the numbers. But you've got to be aware the numbers are artificial. The numbers were put there for navigation. The numbers don't allow you to just isolate what's between the numbers. You've got to read around it to see what's going on. So, Jesus doesn't say, judge not, and he stops right there. Jesus says, judge not, lest you be judged by the same standard. You judge others, you'll be judged by that standard. So, before you try and take the speck out of your brother's eye, you hypocrite-- By the way, notice that's a judgment, you hypocrite.

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Yeah, take the log out of your own eye first and you'll be better able to help your brother. Then he goes on to talk about don't cast your pearls before swine, which requires another whole series of judgments. Is Jesus telling us not to judge here? No, he's telling us to take the speck out of our brother's eye that involves making a judgment. He's simply saying, get that problem out of your life first so you can then better help your brother. In other words, it's not a command not to judge. It's actually a command on how to judge. Don't judge hypocritically. If you've got that problem, fix it, then go help your brother.

But it would be completely ridiculous to say, don't make judgments. Why? Number one, it's a judgment itself. In fact, when people say you ought not judge, I say, then why you judging me for judging? You see, it's a judgment. So, you've got to point that out. So, when people say you ought not judge, point out the fact that that is a judgment. And number two, you wouldn't live very long if you didn't make judgments. I mean, you've-- No matter where you are right now, as you're listening to this or watching this, you've made a thousand judgments today.

Judgments between good and bad, right and wrong, safe choices from dangerous choices. You'd be dead already if you didn't make judgments. In fact, Jesus says this elsewhere. He says this in John, chapter 7, verse 24. He says, stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment. Well, why does he say that? Because so many people judge on appearances rather than the truth. But he's not telling people not to judge. He's telling people to judge. In fact, you've got to make a judgment to be a Christian. You've got to make a judgment to be an atheist.

You've got to make a judgment to be anything, to believe anything. And atheists make judgments. They judge there's no God. Jesus didn't rise from the dead. There is no objective right or wrong when you die. By the way, you're just going to become worm food because there is no meaning or purpose to life. It's just curtains. You just become worm food when you die. Have a nice day. These are all judgments, ladies and gentlemen. And they'll judge, by the way, that Christians ought not impose their religion on people.

By the way, that's a judgment too. Why is that wrong to do? Who said, oh, the Constitution says. Why is the Constitution right? And did you get the Constitution right? We can't use religious principles to come up with moral principles, is that what you're saying? And what's this

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standard? On one hand you say that there is no objective right or wrong because you're an atheist. On the other hand, as soon as I cut you in line, you're upset.

Or as soon as I try to impose my religious point of view on you, you're saying that's wrong. Look, you can't have it both ways. Either there is a God and there is an objective right and wrong way to live, or there isn't, but not both. And all of that, whether you believe it or not, requires a judgment. Everybody's making judgments. Now, technically, we're not really the judges of right and wrong. In fact, many years ago I was at University of Michigan, and this question, came from the audience.

A young man said, well, what do you think about same-sex behavior, about homosexuality? And I responded, it doesn't matter what I think. I'm not the moral arbiter of the universe. I don't determine right and wrong. I discover right and wrong. But if you want to know what natural law says and what the Bible says, well, here it is. I think that's a key distinction we need to make. We're not judging that homosexual behavior is wrong. We're recognizing that it's wrong. Because the moral arbiter of the universe, the creator and sustainer of all things, has already said it's wrong.

Because it doesn't comport with human flourishing, it doesn't procreate, it doesn't allow you to seek what's opposite in you, the opposite sex. It just fuels what you want as a man or as a woman. And that doesn't help you become more like Jesus. It also in many cases is unhealthy, as we've seen in many of the stats. So, there are several reasons why God says this kind of behavior, even though you may want to do it and feel like you're born that way, that behavior is not helpful.

That behavior is not good for you. I'm trying to love you by pointing that out. I'm not the arbiter of right and wrong. God is. I'm just recognizing who or what God has said. By the way, that video is, I think, in our shorts. That sounds funny, doesn't it? [Chuckle] It's in our short videos on the YouTube channel. I think it's probably the video that's gone viral the most. Has like 12 million views. So, if you go to [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org) and click on the short videos, and click 'Popular', I think that'll probably be in the top spot because that's a question that comes up a lot.

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Look, I'm not the judge. I just recognize what the judge has already said. Now, we are not to judge right and wrong, but we are to helpfully point out, judge, or recognize, if you will, when another Christian violates God's word. We're not the arbiters of right and wrong. We just often are the ones that have to point out that somebody is violating God's word or natural law. Same thing, just same source, just different ways of knowing.

And if you disagree with that, if you say that, you know, you should not judge false teachers or teachings, you know what you're doing? You're making a judgment. If you're saying you ought not judge me for what I do, you're making a judgment. You're judging me for what I'm doing. You're doing the same thing that you claim I ought not do. If I were to say to you, you ought not do behavior X and you say you're doing wrong for telling me I ought not do behavior X, you're just telling me I ought not do behavior Y, which is telling you you ought not do behavior X.

Is that clear, by the way? You see the point. Everybody's making judgments. No matter what side of any issue you're on, you're making judgments. Even if you say, well, you, know, I don't know the right answer, that's a judgment. That's a judgment. You're saying I don't have enough information. No matter what position you take on a moral issue or even an issue of fact other than morality, you're making a judgment. Judging is unavoidable. So, Jesus didn't say, don't judge.

He said, judge not, lest you be judged. By the same standard you judge others, you'll be judged by that standard. He's not telling us not to judge. He's telling us don't be hypocrites about it. If you've got that problem, fix it, then go help your brother. Now, how can you do this with family members or others you're close to? You know they don't want to hear it. I think one thing you can say to them, you can ask them a question. Say you have somebody who's involved in an illicit relationship, and you know it's not the right thing.

You can ask them this. Hey, if I was doing something that was hurting me or others, if I was doing something that was violating God's will, would you love me enough to tell me? And then just be quiet. What are they going to have to say? Yeah. Okay. Can I do that for you, now? Now, they may not want to hear it. Okay. It's not your job to convince them. It's just your job to be faithful. It's not your job to enable them in their sin, to affirm them in their sin.

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It's your job to be faithful because you love them and because you love God. Look, love isn't love if it's telling a lie. And that's what you do when you affirm people you know who are going down the wrong road. I mean, if you think about it, being kind without truth is like building your house on the sand without God's truth as the foundation. Chip and Joanna are just putting shiplap and flashy fixtures on a house that's going to collapse on the people living in it.

I don't know if you saw, The Babylon Bee had a headline after all this happened. It went something like, 'Chip and Joanna Launch New Pride-Themed Shiplap.' And it was all rainbow Shiplap behind them. The Pride collection. Yes. Pride goes before the fall, as you know. So, look, I love Chip and Joanna. I think they've been great representatives, at least up to this point, of how to be a joyful, fun, Bible-believing Christian family. At least from the outside anyway.

But I sure hope that they repent of this obvious sin of affirming sin in other people and trying to normalize something that God is completely against because he loves people. Look, we're all born with things we ought not do. That doesn't mean we ought to do them. Now, we can go into the born that way argument if you want to. We don't have time on this program. I write about it in 'Correct, Not Politically Correct: About Same-Sex Marriage and Transgenderism.' By the way, it's not a Bible case.

I'm not quoting Bible verses in that book. But if you want to go deeper, you can get that book right there, 'Correct, Not Politically Correct.' But I sure hope Chip and Joanna come to their senses and realize that the road they're going down is not the right road. And I know it's difficult, especially in the entertainment industry. You know, my mentor, Dr. Norman Geisler, used to say this, and he was right. He used to say, fraternity will nearly always overcome theology.

What did he mean by that? He meant that often relationships will overcome, in most cases what you believe about God, because you're more interested in maintaining a relationship. You're more interested in a relationship with someone you have here than you are with God. Look, we're fallen creatures. This is easy to understand why this happens, but it's basically idolatry. You know, you may say, yeah, I'm against same-sex marriage, but as soon as your kid comes home and says he's gay and he wants to get married, a lot of parents throw Jesus and the Bible under the bus and say, oh, now we're gay-affirming. So much for true love.

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So much for following the truth wherever it leads. So much for denying yourself. So much for not my will, but your will. So much for I love you, Jesus, more than anything else. It's, no. I have another priority, and I think this is the best way to deal with it. Fraternity will almost always overcome theology. When you're working in the entertainment industry, you might see a lot of people that disagree with you, and they seem like nice people, and they are, but that doesn't mean that their sexual practices are something you ought to promote.

Now, these are admittedly tough issues, especially in our culture. So, how do you deal with them? Well, some of the things I've said here, we're saying in a lot more ways, and a lot more information than I can do in this podcast in this brand-new Fearless Faith course. We used to have an older course called Fearless Faith with me, J. Warner Wallace, and Mike Adams, rest his soul. Mike died five years ago. But this new course is with me, Greg Koukl, Alisa Childers, John Ferrer, Phoenix Hayes, Jorge Gil, and here are some of the things we're going to cover in this new course.

It starts August 4th. By the way, if you're listening to me, after August 4th there's still time to join the premium group which will have a bunch of Zoom sessions with me, with John, with Phoenix, you know, live Q & A Zoom sessions. But you can take the self-paced course whenever you want. Greg Koukl is going to present to you '5 Easy Issues: Salvation, Abortion, Gender, Marriage and Sex.' He's also going to present to you Tactics, his great book 'Tactics.' So, you're going to get answers to questions like, what is the secret to evangelism in the modern age?

How can we share the truth without pressuring people? How does or what does the Bible say about abortion? Does it say anything about abortion? And is homosexuality different from other sexual sins? How do you deal with the pronoun issue? These are all things Greg is going to address in his session. He's got a couple of sessions, actually. Alisa has two sessions. She's going to talk about 'How to Discern a Counterfeit Gospel and Understanding Christian Deconstruction.' Have you had a young person, maybe your own, say they're deconstructing? That they don't believe what you believe, mom and dad anymore?

What do you do about that? So, she's going to answer questions like, is progressive Christianity still Christian? Was it ever Christian? What did Jesus teach about the Bible? Is there any difference between deconstruction and honest doubt? Is it okay to doubt and get answers? Or

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did the deconstruction just want to talk you out of the Christian faith? You know what they'll say? These progressive Christians will say, oh, you can believe whatever you want. Just make sure you're not an evangelical Christian. Anything else is fine. In other words, you're the boss. There's no authority above you.

You're the man. You're the man or woman. You get to decide everything that's true and right about reality. And why is sex and sexuality the number one reason people deconstruct? I'm going to do two presentations in this particular course, Fearless Faith. I'm going to do 'Should You Follow Your Heart?' and 'How to Defend the Faith in a Hostile Culture.' So, I'm going to deal with, like, what are the three reasons you need to teach your kids why you can't follow your heart blindly? And what question should you ask your kid if he says he's trans, gay, or something else?

How do you deal with that? I'm going to give you real practical ways you can deal with it in the Fearless Faith course. What is the hidden lie behind medical transition? What is the Overton Window? Have you heard of that? Well, you need to know about the Overton Window if you're going to bring people into the faith. You've got to be very crafty and know-- Crafty in a good way. Know how to bring up issues that the culture rejects wholeheartedly. How do you do that? We'll talk about it. We're going to deal with what beliefs were once unthinkable, but now they're accepted, and how can we talk about somebody struggling with gender identity?

By the way, I'm going to get to some questions again here in a minute. I just want to tell you what's in this course. It's going to be a fabulous course. Dr. John Ferrer is going to talk about how to defend the family by defending the faith. Phoenix is going to talk about sex, gender, and identity. Jorge Gil has an entire section on how to disciple our youth in an age of social media and technology. Man, we all need that. What is the I-Gen generation, and why are they in a mental health crisis, and what you can do about it? How is the media shaping our worldviews more than parents or pastors?

How much time we actually spending on screens? Again, what can you do about all this? Who do you think is discipling your kid more, you or the iPhone? Should your kid even have an iPhone? What can you do if you have and you want to take it away? These are all things we're going to talk about in the Fearless Faith course. We'll have time for questions during the Q & A.

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So, go to CrossExamined.org. Go to online courses. You'll see it there. By the way, we have a new website, too. Check out the new CrossExamined website. Yeah, we're still working out a couple of bugs here and there. If you see a link that doesn't go anywhere, we're still correcting some of that stuff, but most of it is in place.

If you see something that doesn't work, contact us. Contact [diego@crossexamined.org](mailto:diego@crossexamined.org), [diego@crossexamined.org](mailto:diego@crossexamined.org), and we'll get it fixed. But it's news. We've got a great new search engine. It's easy to follow. The CrossExamined website, CrossExamined with a D on the end of it. Anyway, go to CrossExamine.org. Click on Online Courses. You will see the new Fearless Faith course there. It drops August 4th, but as I say, you can join after that. But if you want to be a part of the premium course, you've probably got to join by the second week of August or so.

So, I hope to see you in it, the Fearless Faith course. All right, next question comes from Herb, who says this. Dear team, I just saw today's video where Frank was saying that Jeremiah 29:11 only applied to Old Testament Jews. Can you give me a correlating Scripture for New Testament believers? I have to change my whole prayer routine around now. I've been using Jeremiah 29:11 for a long time. I will subscribe to the blog. I did look through it briefly, but I thought I would ask you guys in the meantime.

Thanks so much, Herb. All right, Herb. Great question. Yeah. When we say that Jeremiah 29:11 doesn't apply to Christians, I don't mean it's not useful to Christians. I don't mean that there's no application at all. What I mean is, is that the promises that were made in Jeremiah 29 are not promises to 21st century Christians. They were promises to the people who were taken exile by Nebuchadnezzar between 605 BC and 586 BC.

He took them to Babylon, his capital. And God said through the prophet Jeremiah to those people in exile, the tribe of Judah, those people in exile, that 70 years later he was going to prosper them and bring them back into the land. So, he said, oh, the plans I have for you. Plans to give you hope, plans to give you a future. Those plans, those specific plans about being back into the land 70 years later and being prosperous, that's not a promise to us.

Again, this is why there are, we have to say there are no verses in the Bible. You just can't read a verse out of context and apply it to yourself without knowing what's going on in that verse. By

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the way, I just went to church here in Charlotte today. Not going to tell you where, but there was an interim pastor, and he talked about Jeremiah 29:11 like this. And I just wanted to scream, ladies and gentlemen. I'm sorry. If I hear another pastor pulling stuff out of context and trying to apply it in an illegitimate way to Christians today, I'm just going to walk out.

I mean, it's crazy. And by the way, I don't think this is hard to understand. If somebody writes you a letter, you don't go into it and pull one verse out and say, I know exactly the context of this. Or if somebody writes somebody else a letter, you don't go in and pull one verse out and then say, this applies to me without knowing the context it might be if it's written with you in mind. But if it's not-- So yes, Jeremiah 29:11 is a passage that tells us about God's nature and character, and his history with his people.

So, it's useful to us. It shows that God didn't abandon his people after he judged them, and that he was going to bring them back into the land, and the promised Messiah would still come through the line of Judah. But it's not telling us specific promises that were made to those people in those days, that those promises are somehow for us. That's not what the passage is teaching. Now, you say what kind of passage can you use? Well, probably the closest passage, and you've got to read around this again is Romans 8:28, where he says, we know that all things work together for good to those that love God and are called according to his purpose.

And he goes on to say that the reason certain things happen is ultimately so you can be conformed to the image of His Son. Now, when it says all things work together for good, it doesn't mean all things are good. There are many bad things that happen to people, but God can use those things to conform those people to the image of His Son. And there are other passages in the New Testament that you can go to about how God will never leave us, or forsake us, or how God, obviously gives us salvation.

And there's much more in Romans 8 about the fact that once you're in Christ, you're predestined, which means you're guaranteed to be glorified in heaven. I mean, there are several very positive passages, obviously, you can go on. But with regard to specific plans that he has for you, he plans that you become conformed to the image of his son, and that may require you and me, because I need to be conformed to the image of his son as well, to go through a lot of difficulty doesn't mean we're going to be prosperous all the time.

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In fact, he may bring us through difficult times, non-prosperous times. In fact, I think in America our biggest problem when it comes to sanctification, our biggest problem when it comes to becoming more like Jesus, is too much prosperity. Now, I'm not wishing poverty on anybody. I'm simply just pointing out that when we get real prosperous, oftentimes we get soft, and we forget about God. This was the problem in the whole Book of Judges, that that cycle that kept going, that when they got prosperous, forgot about God.

They sinned, and then they were judged, and they repented, they came back to God, then they got prosperous again, then they started to forget about God again, then they got judged again, then-- You get the idea. Hasn't it been said something like this, that bad times make good men, good times make bad men? I'm kind of butchering it. It's a little bit more eloquent than that. But you need difficulty to make you better. And to say that God's always going to prosper you just is not true.

It's not true in the Scripture, and it's not true empirically. Your ultimate prosperity is in Jesus, when you're conformed to the image of His Son, and he wipes every tear away, and all pain away in that last day. Of course, if you die before then, you're absent from the body, present with the Lord. You're in a state of paradise, as Jesus said to the thief on the cross. So, there are other passages I might go to Romans chapter 8. In fact, Romans chapter 8, Herb, may be the peak of the entire Bible.

Nothing's going to separate us from the love of God, No nakedness, nor sword, nor famine, nor disease. Nothing's going to separate us. You might want to use that passage there, Herb. Thanks for your question. Great question. Okay. Tim writes in, if someone believes on Christ and is water baptized, will they still get saved if they believe their water baptism was one of the requirements for their salvation? Also, the whole church for the past 1500 years believed water baptism was a requirement for salvation. So, how could that be wrong?

Well, okay, I'm not sure if that's the case. I'm sure there were probably people who said, no, this is a right or a ritual. And I think if you look at the passage in Romans 1, and 1 Corinthians 1, you realize that water baptism is not essential for salvation. It's essential that you get water baptized out of obedience. But you don't have to be water baptized in order to be saved,

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because you're saved by grace alone, through faith alone. And what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1 is, look. He says, I didn't come to baptize.

I came to preach the gospel. And in Romans 1, he says the gospel saves. In other words, in 1 Corinthians 1, he's bifurcating. He's separating baptism from the gospel, water baptism. And then in Romans 1, he says the gospel saves. Well, if the gospel saves in Romans 1 and in 1 Corinthians 1, baptism is not part of the gospel, then baptism isn't necessarily necessary for salvation. Now, can you go to heaven because you have a false belief about that.

Look, if you have to have perfect theology to get into Heaven, none of us are going to make it. I'm sure there are things I believe that aren't true, but hopefully that's not going to keep me out of the kingdom. We know what does get people into the kingdom, and that is the blood of Christ. And by trusting in him, you're in. If you have other false beliefs, that's not a good thing. But I can't say that means that person is not going to be in heaven. So, yeah, there are people that add things to grace. Are they saved?

I hope they are. But look, if people have a false belief about water baptism, I don't think that's going to kick them out of the kingdom because Jesus wants people to be saved more than we do. And if people have already accepted Christ and what he's done, they're saved regardless of any other bad idea they have. Because that's what grace does.

It covers sinful ideas or bad ideas. Now, we'd have to cash this out in specific situations, but in this situation, it seems to me that, sure, a person that, say, goes to the church of Christ that believes water baptism is necessary for salvation, if they've accepted truly Jesus in their heart and they know that they're saved by grace through faith, and they're just adding water baptism because they think that's somehow what the Scriptures teach, sure. I would obviously think they're saved, but it's better to be right on this issue than to just dismiss it.

All right, final question. I mean, we know how people-- Let me back up. We know how people are saved. They are saved by grace through faith. So, let's not try and add anything to that if we can avoid it. If we do well, that's on us. That's kind of the book of Galatians. Don't add things to Jesus. The book of Galatians is Jesus plus nothing saves you. Not circumcision, not baptism. It's

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not good works. Jesus plus nothing. Let's preach that. All right, we'll let God figure out how he's going to deal with people who have other false beliefs added to that.

All right, final question comes from Gary, who is on a blog that is an anti-Christian fundamentalism blog. He writes in. He says this quote, and he's not asking a question. He's making a statement. Let me read it. While the longer ending of Mark, verses 9-20 is included in most Greek manuscripts and was widely used in the church, modern scholarship generally agrees that it's not in-- It's not original to Mark's Gospel.

Early church fathers acknowledged the absence of the longer ending in some manuscripts and even expressed concerns about its perceived inconsistencies with the rest of the gospel. Despite these concerns, the longer ending of Mark was widely accepted and used in church services, including readings from the lectionary divine literature for centuries. He has that in a quote for some reason. The next part is not a quote, so I don't know where he's getting that quote from. But anyway, then he goes on to say the early Christian church was complicit in fraud. It allowed scribal additions such as the longer ending of Mark and the woman caught in adultery periscope to be preached from the pulpit for centuries as the word of God.

The church scholars knew better but did not stop the perpetuation of these tall tales as Holy Scripture among the laity. The claim by Christian apologists that the early church would never have allowed embellishments to the oral gospel is disproven by the undeniable fact that the early church did not allow embellishments to the written Gospel, unquote, from Gary. Okay, Gary, let me point out a couple things. Number one, mistakes are not the same thing as fraud, okay? If someone made a mistake and thought the passage should have been in there, or they only had one manuscript with the passage in there, that's not fraud.

And even if it is fraud, no one, no Christian apologist I know thinks that the early Church fathers or anybody in the church is inerrant or infallible. The early Church fathers were not infallible or inerrant. That's, by the way, that's one of the problems I have with the Catholic Church, because the Catholic Church has an authority problem, in my view, because they want to add to what the Bible says, maybe what Church fathers say, what popes say, what councils say. Much of what they say may be true. But I'm saying, who's the ultimate authority?

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It's not the Church fathers. It's not me or you. It's the original documents which were reconstructed by comparing the thousands we have. We don't have the autographs of the New Testament, but we have so many manuscripts that we can reconstruct what the autograph said. And in fact, where there is dispute, which is why you're bringing up the end of the Gospel of Mark, we know where those areas of dispute are precisely because we have so many manuscripts.

So, I don't claim everybody in the church was perfect. I'm simply claiming that we can identify where they made mistakes or even purposeful changes because we have so many manuscript documents. You couldn't, if you were a scribe, change the word of God and get away with it. Why? Because the Word of God had spread all over the ancient world. And if you change your document, you can't simultaneously change all the other ones.

That's why when you bring these manuscripts together, you can see who changed, either by mistake or fraud, their manuscript. That's what textual criticism does. So, I don't think that your position here, Gary, actually does what you think it does. I've never claimed that the early church fathers are infallible, were infallible, or that every scribe was.

I'm simply saying we can reconstruct what the original said. And by the way, glad that you asked. I think the end of Mark and the periscope known as the woman caught in adultery were in the original documents. And there's a lot of good evidence for that. And this evidence is just coming out, by the way. One piece of evidence was put together by my friend Dr. Warren Gage, who we've had on this program, a few weeks ago when we were talking about the Book of Revelation.

And we also started talking about chiasms. Now, chiasms are hard to talk about on radio, but I want you to think of half of an X, okay? And I'm just going to describe what a chiasm is and then refer you to his work. A chiasm highlights the central point being made. And so, if somebody wants to make a central point, a Bible writer, even a Greek writer, the Greeks did this. They would make a progression down to a central point.

They would say point one, point two, point three, point four, and say the central point is point five. And then they would recede from point five in the same manner they approach point five.

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So, they'd make a similar comment in point four, then point three, then two, then one. And so, you had this kind of inverted X or, not an inverted X, half of an X, or let's say a greater sign, okay? And these chiasms are all over the Bible. And there are a couple of chiasms in the last couple of chapters of Mark, which includes the disputed verses 9 to 20.

If you take out verses 9 to 20, which, by the way, don't add anything new to the text in the sense that the stuff that's taught in Mark, the end of Mark, is taught elsewhere in Scripture. Maybe I don't know about handling snakes. Maybe that's not in there. But the idea that you could be bit by a snake as Paul was at the end of the Book of Acts, and he just shakes it off, I think that's referring to vipers in the beginning of the Gospel of Luke and also this passage in Mark.

In any event, I'm digressing again. The point here is if you take verses 9 to 20 out of the Gospel of Mark, you're taking off part of the chiasm. And the chiasm shows that this was forethought. It should be in there. And the same thing is true of the chiasms around the woman caught in adultery found in the Gospel of John. So, when you put these pieces together, you now have evidence that this was thought through.

This wasn't a randomly tacked on ending. It seems like the original order of the Gospel of Mark completed his thought with the chiasm. And if you want to see this, you need to go to Warren Gage's YouTube channel, because he just put out a video on the ending of the Book of Mark, and I think it's titled something like, why Wes Huff is wrong about the ending of the Gospel of Mark. Now, I love Wes Huff. Don't get me wrong. I just don't know if Wes has seen this evidence.

And Warren is just pointing this out that this evidence is decisive to say the end of the Book of Mark is authentic, and I think also decisive with regard to the woman caught in adultery. In fact, the entire Book of Mark is one big giant chiasm. There's forethought there. It leads up to the central point. You know what the central point in the Gospel of Mark is? At least according to some of these scholars, the central point in the Gospel of Mark is the transfiguration, and particularly Mark, chapter nine.

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I think it's verse seven. I'm going to look at it right now. Where God says from heaven, this is my son. Listen to him. Let me see if-- I'm doing this from memory, so I've got to check it. Let me see. Mark, chapter nine. I believe it's verse seven. Yeah, here it is, verse seven. Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud. This is my son, whom I love.

Listen to him. The entire Gospel of Mark is leading up to that verse, you know, we, in our western way of thinking. We put the main point at the end that everything goes to the end, that everything climaxes at the end of a story. The Greeks and the Bible writers, they often did it, that the center was the main point. They wanted to get a point, so they build up to the center and then they'd recede from the center with the same kind of points they led up to it.

That's the chiasm. And that's what we're doing, by the way, in the new series we're still recording for TV and ultimately an online course called 'The Bible You Never Knew.' You don't see this in a casual reading. I don't. But scholars who know the original languages or really study this, they see this, and they go, wow. There's a lot more to this than I thought. So it's, in fact, this might be a greater apologetic, a greater piece of evidence than any other kind of evidence that the Bible is inspired.

It's really hard to come up with all these interacting chiasms. In fact, Warren says, and I've seen some of the material on this, that the entire Gospel of John and the book of Revelation together are one giant chiasm. And if you take one of those little points out, leading either up to the chiasm or down away, the whole thing collapses. It's like a house of cards. It'd be really hard to do that over that span without some divine intervention.

I mean, that's a lot of material. What do you got? What is it? Twenty-one chapters in John and 22 in Revelation. And the whole thing is one big giant chiasm and then a little chiasm. Wow. We're going to unpack some of this in the TV program and online later. But wow, just go to WarrenGage.com. Go to his YouTube channel to see that show on that. Now, Warren's very academic. He's going to walk through you step by step. I don't have the patience right now to do that, but Warren will do it.

So, check that out. And don't forget about the Fearless Faith course, man. Make yourself ready to make a difference for eternity. Go to [crossexamined.org](http://crossexamined.org). Click on online courses. Click on the

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Fearless Faith course, and we will see you there, Lord willing. And we'll also see you here next time. God bless.

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