

MY STORY: A Spiritual & Intellectual Journey with Dr. John Lennox

September 11, 2026

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, right now I'm in Utah at the Charlie Kirk Memorial. We'll tell you more about that in a future show, but today we have a special treat. I was in Oxford with John Lennox just last month and had the privilege of sitting down with him for over an hour to ask him about his new biography, which is really his autobiography, which covers so much of his life, and you're going to want to get this book.

It is absolutely amazing. It's 700 pages, but it actually reads like it's about 100. You're not going to want to put it down. And John, in my opinion, is one of the best apologists out there. He's 82 years old. He is so likable, so winsome, but also very, very precise on some of the biggest issues out there, in apologetics, particularly the science issues.

And the first question I asked him was about his autobiography. How did he put it all together? We're just going to give you some snippets in this program. The entire show is going to be in the next podcast, but let's see John Lennox. Let's see his answer to that question. How he was able to pull together his autobiography. We're at St. Ebbe's Church right here in Oxford. Well, you've taught here for how many years at Oxford, John?

JOHN:

Well, I've been here around 30 years. I came in 1997. So almost 30 years. I haven't taught all that time, but I've been teaching all my life, so.

FRANK:

Now your new autobiography is such a splendid tome. It's almost 700 pages, but it reads like it's about 100.

I breezed right through it. It is so well done. It's a spiritual and intellectual journey, and I don't know how you remember all these places you've been, John. I mean, you've been all over the world. You've spoken to audiences about Christ in five different languages. You've been behind the Iron Curtain. You've been to Russia so many times. You've been to Ukraine. You've been down under. And the book is just so well done. How did you? How were you able to pull all these details together?



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JOHN:

I don't really know. I think part of it is that when I was traveling behind the Iron Curtain, we had a group of us that formed a trust, and so we had to have by law, trust meetings and reports, and that helped enormously.

Also, I'd written various reports through the years, but unfortunately, I didn't think very much of what was happening in the sense that I didn't realize how historic it was. So I didn't keep as accurate a diary. In fact, I hardly kept a diary at all, but there was enough evidence out there that I was able to scrape from talks, reports, all this kind of thing, and it came together in the end pretty well.

And I had several friends who had accompanied me on these journeys, and whose memories were better than mine. So I used other people's memories, and even details in odd diaries of flights and ticket stubs. Oh, I went to there this time, but it seems to have come together fairly well.

FRANK:

Very well, and I want to sort of start at the end. I'm a big believer, Dr. Lennox, that we ought to know what the purpose of life is so we can live it well. And you gave a talk. I think it may have been at Florida State. And let me get the exact name of the talk. This is the name of the talk that you gave, and I want to ask you to sort of summarize what you said here. The talk was called "Why Are We Here: God, Life, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Why are we here?

JOHN:

Well, I believe we're here because this is a created universe by an intelligent creator, and we have been made in His image, which is hugely important. We have been created with consciousness, and we've got five senses, and it is through those senses that we apprehend what's around us, and they mediate meaning. We see things, we perceive beauty, we hear things, we can understand language because God has made us as talking people.

So for me, it centers round the dignity of being a created being, but not simply a created being, created in the image of a personal God. By that I mean that the universe, and I have been an amateur astronomer, I love looking at the galaxies and all the rest of it. They show the glory of God, but they were not made in His image.

Human beings were. And I think at a time when people, particularly young people, are searching for meaning and purpose and all the rest of it. If we leave the Creator out of the

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equation, I'm afraid we end up in darkness and confusion and meaninglessness. So, I find it very important to start where the Bible starts.

That's in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and what it does, actually, that statement, and God created men and women in His own image, that actually represents the foundation of any value system that's worth talking about. I remember listening to Jordan Peterson, reading Genesis, and he came across this statement.

He stopped, and he said, "Man," he said, "that is the foundation of Western civilization. And we ignore it at our peril," and I think he's perfectly right. So I see a responsibility as an academic and public intellectual, I suppose, to bring that in as a very serious philosophy and worldview, and contrast it with the other worldviews that are unfortunately dominating still today: atheism, agnosticism, and all the rest of it.

So, there's that. But there's then the uniqueness of human beings goes further than simply a bland statement made in the image of God. And it's this that we are unique in the following absolutely staggering sense that human beings model 101 if you like, like us.

Are the only kind of creature that God could become. Now that's a staggering statement because that's just putting what John says at the beginning of his gospel: the Word, that is God, became flesh, became human. Now when you reflect on that, that we are the sort of being that God could become.

That is a powerful witness to my mind, against this transhumanist attempt to create superhumans through artificial intelligence and all the rest of it. This is the bedrock, and this is what we need to explore. This universe is a word-based universe. By that I mean, we can describe its physical nature to a certain extent in terms of mathematics, which is a language; it's word-based.

Biology, one of the biggest discoveries of my lifetime is the DNA code, which is the longest word we've ever discovered in a chemical language. 3.4 billion letters long as the human genome. It's a word-based living universe, and the statement in the beginning was the word.

Resonates very deeply with me at all kinds of levels. So, why are we here? Well, the answer to that is as staggering as it is simple. You and I are here because God wanted us to be. Now we need to think about that. In the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible about which I've just written another big, long book.

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There are various acts and scenes, a bit like a musical, with themes that go through and reach a climax, and then you start again. And one of them occurs in chapter 4 where there is praise in heaven for God as Creator.

But the actual wording is fascinating. It goes roughly like this: "We praise you, O God, as Creator, because of your will, they were and were created." Now that's slightly awkward in contemporary English, but it's saying something absolutely staggering. You see, people are looking for meaning and purpose, and one of the dimensions of that.

Is being accepted and loved, that there's someone who wants you to exist. And we all know if we've got kids and grandkids, what it's like for a child to come home from school and say, "Dad, they didn't want me." We can know that even as adults that they don't want us.

[FRANK]:

We'll be back after the break.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. We have a special episode today. We're taking excerpts from a longer interview I did with Dr. John Lennox out at Oxford University, and he was in the middle of an answer. Let's pick it up where we were before the break. Here's Dr. Lennox.

JOHN:

And so I look at that statement of praise in heaven. I exist because God wanted me to be. That is utterly staggering. The government of the UK doesn't really know I exist. They want me to be a number in the IRS and so on. But this idea that there's a creator God who's not only vaguely interested, but to whom your existence is important.

Now that's. Just level one, that's the level of creation. But then this God becomes human to give us an even greater value, because He's come to save us from the mess we've made of the world, our lives, and everything else. He's come to redeem us through Christ on the cross, and so we've got two levels of valuation.

One is, I'm made in the image of God. God loves me whether I feel it or not. He wanted me to be. But now, in order to give me that well-being that you mention, that sense of living a good life, He's prepared to do something actively in my life. And that's hugely important. People often say to me, "Look, you're a scientist."

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You can't believe in this rubbish because you can't test it." I said, "Just a minute. You can test it." Jesus promised when he was on earth that people that turned away from the mess in life, their sin and rebellion, and we're all full of it, and trusted him as Lord and Savior, and that needs to be unpacked in detail, of course, they would experience certain things.

First of all, they would experience peace. I meet many people who've no peace. They've no idea what peace is. I was interviewed on the famous Diary of a CEO recently, who's one of the biggest podcasts in the world. And sure—

[FRANK]:

Millions have seen that, yes.

JOHN:

Yes, he said, the peace you have and the confidence, I don't meet it, in people other than Christians like you, which is a very encouraging thing from him to say. Not only peace, but a sense of forgiveness, and we need that. But above all, perhaps, it's the power that Christ gives, if we follow Him through His Spirit, to not only have a sense of well-being, but to live a life that gives us that sense that it's fulfilled and meaningful and purposeful.

And you don't find it anywhere else. I often say, you know, when people say, "but don't other religions and philosophies offer that?" Well, none of them do, actually. And I put it this way, which is quite strong. I say, "Jesus doesn't compete with anybody else, any other worldview, any other religion or philosophy, because he offers me something none of them do: peace, forgiveness, certainty in this life, and then a certainty of being." If I use the technology word uploaded, resurrected into a world to come, where I will share with others who believe in Him eternally the glories of a life that's utterly meaningful and full.

So, that's roughly speaking how I approach that, and I find that when talking to people, you can see that they know that they do not have it. And they want it, but it involves certain steps of commitment, repentance, and sometimes they're not so prepared to do that.

FRANK:

You have demonstrated peace in some very hostile situations, not just, say, communist countries, but in front of some people that were not very kind to you, on the stage.

You and I have both debated Christopher Hitchens and I loved Christopher Hitchens, but he was pretty caustic in debates, and you of course have debated Peter Atkins, who's been very caustic

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in debates. And in your biography, friends, if you don't have John Lennox's biography, stop right now and purchase it because you are going to be blessed by it. But you describe in this biography some different encounters you've had with people and how you've been able to disarm them. With this peace that you have, John, even when they're unkind to you. How do you maintain that level of calm and composure in front of hostile audiences?

JOHN:

Well, I think that I was pretty well prepared for it. In my youth, I saw a lot of hostility, both sectarian fighting and all this kind of thing in Northern Ireland.

But I saw very rapidly that if you lose your cool, you've lost, and audiences recognize it. And so I observed very carefully the way in which Jesus talked to people. The only people he was angry with were religious bigots, but with other people, he was empathetic, sympathetic.

He asked them questions. He listened to them. All this kind of thing. And I have proved in my life that a soft answer turns away wrath. And sometimes, even in public discussion forums, people will shift when they see that you're not hostile to them. You mentioned Christopher Hitchens.

I liked him too. He was a showman, of course. And the aggressive stance and all the rest of it was part of the show. But I think one of the reasons I found it worthwhile debating these people in public was that the audience could see that I wasn't getting phased with this kind of thing, nor was I compromising what I believe.

It's an exercise in a way, in what Paul says in Ephesians, speaking truth in love, and, you're right, you come in a sense deep down to love these guys. You want to see them understanding the nature of the Christian message. And often their pose and their attitude is because they've never understood it.

It's quite clear they never have understood it. So it's important to keep doing it because people watch, and many people get converted even years later. I get letters from people who converted through watching my debate with Richard Dawkins. It started it all off.

FRANK:

Yeah, at one point Dawkins, during that debate, after you described the fact that God came into this universe, the Logos took on flesh, and took our sins upon Himself; he called that trivial.

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JOHN:

Oh yes, it was more precisely what he did was when I mentioned the resurrection. That was the point in that debate where we were suddenly told, without warning, that we got two minutes left each, and we were supposed to have finishing out the actual content of what was being asked at the time, plus nine minutes each.

I'd spent months on those nine minutes. Suddenly told, for reasons that really were specious. That we'd only got two minutes, and I thought, what do I do with this? Because I had to go first, so I decided to go for the heart of Christianity, the resurrection, which is when he said, "We've been talking all these great ideas and so on, and now we come down to the resurrection. How petty."

FRANK:

Petty was the word.

JOHN:

"How unworthy of the universe." Well, he was talking nonsense. If Jesus rose from the dead, it's one of the most significant things, if not the most significant thing that's ever happened. But that was a turning point for many people watching that. They saw the bankruptcy of his atheism that he had nothing. The emperor had no clothes, and therefore I feel as I look back, we were both quite upset by that robbing us of the proper way of finishing. But nevertheless, over the years, it's that that people refer to. As a turning point in their lives.

FRANK:

Now, in the autobiography, you tell of a story when you were quite young and starting out, about a Nobel laureate who kind of took you aside and said, "Lennox, you got to drop this God thing." Can you relate that story?

JOHN:

Well, he didn't quite take me aside, although in a sense he did. This was in my Cambridge College, my second year, so I was 19 or 20 maybe when it happened, and I just found myself sitting beside this man at dinner, and did what I normally do with people, ask questions. And at one point, I asked him that when he did the work for which he won the Nobel Prize, did it ever occur to him that there might be an intelligence behind the universe?

And he said no very sharply, and I could see he was being disingenuous, and that finished the conversation dead. He turned very pointedly to his neighbor, and I thought that's the end of it.

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But it wasn't the end of it. At the end of the meal, he essentially ordered me to come to his room, "come to my room." So I went to his room, and he had two or three senior people from the university there.

And my memory of it is that they sat me down and they stood, and he said, "Now." Do you want a career in science?" And I said, "Yes, sir." Well, he said, in front of witnesses here tonight, "You give up this naive belief in God, because if you pursue it, you will suffer by comparison with your peers.

You'll never make it. So give it up." And I looked him straight in the eye. I can remember it so well. I said, "Sir, tell me, what have you got to offer me that's better than what I've got in Christ?" Just like that. And he said, "Well, there's the evolutionary philosophy of Henri Bergson." Well, I knew what that was because I'd read C.S.

Lewis. And I didn't go into details. It was a very bad choice because Bergson himself talked about becoming a Catholic after the war. I said, "If that's all you've got, I'll take the risk. I'll stick with Christ." And I got up and walked out, and that put a lot of steel into my heart and mind.

And I decided many things that day because it was a revelation of the unacceptable side of academia, and I resolved if I ever got into the kind of position I hold today, that I would never, ever consciously try and browbeat somebody. And I couldn't help reflecting that if he'd been a Christian, and I'd been an atheist, he'd lost his job the next day over doing something like that.

It was a terrible abuse of academic credentials, and I resolved that what I would do if I got the chance would be promote public discussion and give people a space to make up their own minds. And that's what I've done most of my life.

[FRANK]:

We'll be back after the break.

AD:

Could you answer this question: Why doesn't God let everyone into heaven, or do all religions get you to heaven? Well, Frank Turek can, and now you can. Watch him tackle the toughest questions from his latest college tour appearance. See real students challenge Frank, and watch how truth stands up under pressure. Subscribe to our Cross Examined YouTube channel right now to watch. That's Cross Examined, two words, on YouTube and sharpen your faith for the real world.

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FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, on September 14th, the course, the history of ancient and medieval philosophy, with my mentor, Dr. Norman Geisler, is going to start. Trust me, you want to be a part of that. Dr. Geisler is a legend in apologetics, a legend in philosophy. It's one of the best courses I've ever taken. We were able to get it from his son, David Geisler, and we're offering it to you.

So go to cross-examined.org, click on online courses, you'll see it there. Dr. Richard Howe from Southern Evangelical Seminary, who taught with Doctor Geisler for years, is going to be the primary instructor for you. I'll also jump in on occasion on those Zoom sessions. Check it out. It's going to be amazing. We, today, are talking to the great Dr. John Lennox, and we are interviewing him or we're interviewing him out in Oxford just last month, and we're bringing you this abbreviated version of the complete interview, I asked Dr. Lennox, "Didn't your father actually tell you to read Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*?" And here is his answer.

Didn't your father give you *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx?

JOHN:

Yes, he did. That's right. You've got a very good memory. And told me I needed to read it because I needed to know what other people thought. And they were humble people. He was not educated beyond 16, and yet he read voraciously, and realized that it was very important for me to think not only about the Christian worldview but other worldviews.

And I owe that to them. They opened Scripture to me, and it would never have occurred to me in those days that it was remotely boring, because they made it fascinating, and opened my mind. It was a mind opener, not a mind closer. So, those were good preparations, but that incident has lived with me. It went very deep, and I'm glad it happened, because it prepared me for the lesser minds of Dawkins and Hitchens and so on.

FRANK:

And why would he need to browbeat you if he had all the evidence anyway?

JOHN:

Oh yes, absolutely. I mean, when you begin to analyze it, it was almost incredible, and yet I've seen it. I have chatted to more than one Nobel Prize winner who's moved in that kind of direction.

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FRANK:

Well, I notice in the autobiography as well, toward the end of the autobiography, you talk about attending a university. I'm trying to remember where, but a Nobel laureate wanted you to send him your papers. It's in the autobiography.

JOHN:

Oh yes, that, that is absolutely right. That happened at Texas A&M University, where I was invited to give a lecture in the mathematics physics department. Very prestigious, all sorts of. I remember that the head of department opened it up by saying, "Don't want to put pressure on you, Professor Lennox, but we've got five National Academy members here and one Nobel Prize winner." And I talked really about why I think that science and faith in God could work very well together.

And when I'd finished, the Nobel Prize winner started asking me questions, and he asked everybody to sit and wait. He said, "Have you written about this?" I said, "Yes, sure." Well, he said, "Have you got anything here?" And I gave him some script or something with the. Oh, no, he got me to write down a list of my books. So he kept everybody seated while he went out to the photocopier and made copies of these and gave them to everybody else.

And then he came over to me and he said, "I lost my wife last year and I'm beginning to think about things. Why have I never heard arguments like this before? These are entirely new to me." Staggering.

FRANK:

Then you had another instance where you were sharing the stage with a woman who was a well-known atheist, and she saw her husband decline and die.

And you were so gracious to her that you got up in front of the entire audience and told the audience that they needed to listen intently to what this woman had to say. And you may have changed her worldview completely that night, John. I don't know where she is now, but.

JOHN:

Well, that was I forgot her name, Margaret.

And she is a world expert on assisted dying and all this kind of thing. And her husband had an awful cycle accident. And she, in the end, had to allow the hospital to turn the life support off, and it was a Veritas forum in Utah State University.

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I'll never forget it. And I asked, "could I meet her for a meal beforehand?" And during the meal, I said, "Now, Margaret, I know what has happened in your life in the last few months. Everybody will know. Do you mind if I mention it?" She said, "Would you?" I said, "Of course I would." So I stood up at the beginning.

I said, "Look, this is a very unusual discussion on the problem of pain and suffering. And one of the people speaking to you, it goes extremely deep. And I said, "I want you to listen as you've never listened before, and be very respectful of what she has to say, because none of you may ever have faced this, but you may have to one day." So we presented, and at the end she came over and gave me a hug, and she said, "I want a photograph." I said, "Why?" She said, "None of my department will ever believe what has happened this evening." So, how deep it went, I don't know, but it was extremely moving.

And that I feel was a good witness in a way that somehow we get across to people that the love of God is real even though they disagree with our belief in God that we show a human empathy particularly when they're suffering. Now that is on YouTube I believe still in the Veritas collection.

FRANK:

We'll try and put these in the show notes ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Lennox has been on at least 60 Veritas forums, in the United States, over, I want to say about 10 years, John.

JOHN:

Oh, more than that.

FRANK:

Was it longer than that?

JOHN:

More than that I think. I just don't remember. I would say 15 to 20.

FRANK:

And if you search for John Lennox Veritas forum, you're probably going to find plenty of video. But that's an example of not just answering a question, but answering a person.

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JOHN:

Oh, that's absolutely right. I was taught a very long time ago that sometimes you have to answer the question, but more often you have to answer the questioner. And that is an example of that. And behind it, actually, the motivation is, how can I befriend this person to take a bit of the sting out of what they feel about me?

And I've experienced this many times where people that were openly hostile wouldn't shake hands with me before the discussion. In the end, were hugging me, of course, and not because I compromised, but often because they could see I agreed with some of what they said. In other words, find out where you can agree without compromise of truth, and people respond to that.

FRANK:

You also have described this fallen world as a combination of bombs and beauty.

JOHN:

Yes.

FRANK:

Can you unpack that further for us?

JOHN:

Well, the idea there is to try to help people who are trying to come to terms with the hardest question that any of us face.

That is the twin problems of pain and suffering. And that's a detailed thing that I've gone into in many talks and discussions. Perhaps the most interesting one for your audience would be the one I did at Ground Zero on the steps of Columbia University. It's called the "Loud Silence," and it's a Veritas Forum talk.

But that particular thing is, we all have argued at length, usually at college, you know, surely a good God could have done this and should have done this and so on and so forth, and we never get anywhere with that. We just don't get anywhere. And it's a very famous argument that goes way back.

It was used by David Hume in the Enlightenment, but it was also used way back in Greek philosophy, particularly in Epicurean philosophy. Surely, if God is all good and all powerful, that they can't both be true because there is suffering and pain. And we never get anywhere.

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And I thought about that a great deal, because as a mathematician, when we spend hundreds of years maybe trying to solve a problem and we get nowhere, we try to change the question, and that's not cheating. Because I believe in this particular instance we can change the question from shouldn't a good and all-powerful God and all the rest of it, to the following, which is just as hard, but we can get further with it.

And that is to say, any worldview has got to grant that this is a mixed picture: bombs and beauty, barbed wire and beautiful flowers. Sunsets, and mountains. It's a mixed picture, and no worldview that doesn't admit that can get anywhere. That's number one. So we must grant that that is the picture.

My question now is this: Granted that it's like that, is there anywhere evidence that there is a God that you could trust with that? Now that's a hard question, but I believe that there is a way of looking at that that gets us further, because it is the notion that God Himself has suffered in Christ on the cross.

And I've often said to people, the heart of the Christian claim is that this is God incarnate. Well, what's God doing on a cross? Surely, at the very least, it shows you that God has not remained distant. From the question of pain and suffering, but it's become part of it, and that often opens the floodgates and people begin to talk, and that's the first part. But the second part is, the resurrection changes everything.

God raised the one who suffered from the dead, and that opens up the possibility, not that we won't suffer, but there's something that transcends it for the person that trusts in Christ to carry them through that, and that's a way in that I find people can begin to understand. Doesn't necessarily remove the pain, but it shows them hope.

And I remember, I was in New Zealand just after the earthquake, same week, and changed all my talks, and all people wanted to know why, why does this happen? And I remember speaking on that particular thing in Christchurch where it happened. And afterwards, I was handed a little piece of paper by a woman who'd lost her husband in the earthquake.

And the piece of paper moved me deeply. It was, I left the church because I can't face seeing people this morning. But what you said is the first bit of hope I can see, and it was about the death and resurrection of the Lord. It doesn't mean that she's no pain, but it means that she can have a hope that transcends that loss, and I feel therefore that we have something to share where life seems to be at its most meaningless.

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You started this by saying, "Where can we find meaning in life?" Well, if death is the end, there's no ultimate meaning. And the atheists can see that very clearly. They've just got no answer to it. Well, if they're right, well, that's how it is. But I don't think they're right. I think there's evidence that they're wrong.

[FRANK]:

We'll be back after the break.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. A special treat this week for the radio audience. We're actually showing you clips from an interview I had with Dr. John Lennox just last month over in the UK, Oxford. Here is another clip from that amazing interview with Dr. Lennox. Let me ask you about Why people believe what they believe?

Because I ask a lot of atheists and non-believers on college campuses, John, this question. I ask, "If Christianity were true, would you become a Christian?" And 99 times out of 10, the answer is no. I haven't, there are people that come to faith through evidence. There are people who have come to faith by reading your books, maybe by reading my books and other books.

Mere Christianity from C.S. Lewis, which was composed right here. How much in your experience have you seen that unbelief is more a matter of rebellion, the will rather than the mind?

JOHN:

Oh, greatly so. And in many conversions, friendship plays a much bigger role than intellectual conviction.

And we must remember, then, that, remember that people are people. And we must show personal empathy in all this kind of thing and find out where they're coming from. Now, when I first met questions like that, they were really what we call the genetic fallacy. You believe in God because your parents did, and that still comes up a lot.

And I had to handle that. And one of the ways I did throughout my life was to talk to people who did not share my faith. Find out why they believed what they believed and factored that into my thinking, and that led to some conversions because I find the intellectual side on one extreme can be a complete smokescreen.

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It's not what people are interested in. I learned that early on, sitting in college in Cambridge. I was asked by a Christian at dinner why I believed in a resurrection, and I tried to keep my voice down because there are a lot of big rugby playing men, football players, you know, and after about five minutes, one of them yelled and thumped the table and all the plates jumped and said, "That's the biggest nonsense I've ever heard, you see." So, I said, "You feel very strongly about this, don't you?" He said, "I do.

I feel really strongly." So I said, "What did you make of the evidence for the resurrection that Paul gives when you read it?" Dead silence. "I never read it." Oh, I said, "I thought you were giving me an informed opinion. Why don't you come round and have coffee with me?" Half an hour later, he said, "Look, the real reason I burst out tonight was my parents forced Christianity down my throat and I didn't like it." So I said, "This is the first honest thing you said this evening." And within half an hour, he was on his knees, and he got converted and lived to prove it.

It just showed it was complete smokescreen, and we need to learn to detect that because sometimes it's genuine, but there is a lot. I believe that when Scripture says that we are rebellious, we are rebellious. We're anti-God, and there's a moral and a willful attitude against God, and that tests it.

Your question: If I gave you evidence that could convince you that Christianity was true, would you follow this path? No. Well, now let's talk about that no. What is it that bugs you? And there, I believe, is where to go to try to get some honesty out of people.

FRANK:

You also tell a wonderful story that I should have used today in my cab ride over here with the Muslim who was driving because he was talking about all the things he needed to do in order to achieve paradise and Allah would decide in the end. And I should have thought of your story, John. I was trying to communicate to him grace. But all of the other world religions out there think you have to work your way to God, and I've never heard anyone tell a better sort of analogy for why that doesn't work than your analogy of when you first met your wife Sally. Can you tell our audience about this? Because I think this is quite profound.

JOHN:

Well, I owe this illustration in various variants to my mentor, but it really works with all kinds of people. I often say that when we're thinking about religion, the big question is, as you know, on what basis will we be accepted?

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And I wait to hear what the basis is that is suggested to me. And it's always a variant on if I keep obeying the rules, the laws, then in the end I will be judged. And if God is favorable, or Allah or whoever then I will be accepted. So I say, "You can't know you're accepted on this journey." "Oh, absolutely not.

It depends on my merit." Well, I said, "You know, God is not a theory but a person, and our relationships with persons are not like you've described, you know." And then I said, "imagine that I see a beautiful girl," which I did, at Cambridge, and I said, "I'd like you to marry me." Now, our family has a very old tradition, and that is that upon marriage, the husband gives to his wife a cookbook, and I've got it here actually because I'm very keen on getting this thing going.

And she looks absolutely amazed, and I say, "well turn to page 127." Okay, apple cake. Now I said, "here's how it works in principle. I like apple cake and here are the rules for apple cake. You will take so many grams of flour, so many grams of sugar, so many apples and so on, put them together." Now I said, "if you keep these rules, Sally.

Let's be generous. Let's say 40 years. If you keep them for 40 years, then I will accept you. If you can't, I'm afraid it's back to your mother." And you know, audiences absolutely roar at that. And then I look at them, and they say, "Why are you laughing? Because that's exactly how many of you are treating God. You would never insult a fellow human being.

By making your relationship and acceptance depend on their merit, what they produce." And this is exactly the same with God. You cannot earn God's acceptance, but you can accept it as a free gift, and people understand that. And I found that illustration works very well indeed. And I say it doesn't lead to people saying, "Well, he doesn't care how I cook, because my wife now cooks not to gain acceptance, but because she's got it." And I live for God, not to earn brownie points by giving talks to people like you, but because I've got that acceptance, I don't have to work for it.

FRANK:

In fact, you quote C.S. Lewis.

JOHN: I do, yes.

FRANK:

In the book. Again, the autobiography, ladies and gentlemen, of John Lennox, a spiritual and intellectual autobiography. Here's how you put it. You say, "C.S. Lewis describes what a

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Christian's attitude should be towards life after death, and puts it beautifully: quote, 'Not hoping to get to heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of heaven is already inside you.'

JOHN:

That's exactly right. Yeah, he puts that very well, and it is so difficult for people to see that in a meritocracy where we get promotion because of what we do, we earn what we get, that they keep thinking that it must be the same with God, and it's actually an insult to God to suggest it would be that way.

FRANK:

In fact, you even say in the autobiography toward the end, John, where you come to the present day. You say, and this, it's kind of, sorry. It's kind of moved me a little bit because, first of all, you were repenting about moving your wife to Ireland, and in the book, you say I was being selfish about that.

You can get the book to read what that's about, but then you also said, "I'm concerned that this autobiography has been more about me than my Savior." So, to our audience, many of them are young people, many of them are mature Christians. John, you've got 83 years of wisdom now, almost coming up on 83 this November. What do you want to say to them? What should they be doing now to honor Christ and become a true ambassador?

JOHN:

What I want to say is what was said to me when I was a teenager: get into the word individually, prayerfully, and learn to wait on God, and ask Him to speak.

And when He does, and He will fulfill His promise, you will have something to say. But if you don't, you'll have nothing to say. And all of us want to have, if we want to communicate the Christian faith, we want to have something to say that's meaningful. And we get there through our contact with God in whose image we are made, and through the Savior who is prepared to give us His wisdom from above.

And that would be the main thing to get into Scripture. And to share and witness what we know of God, we start knowing very little. I don't think I know much yet, but to share, and it transforms our lives when we see it work, at work, in the lives of other people. So I just wish everybody that's watching this, God bless you and use you.

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We need you desperately in the world today, where young people feel that they've failed when they're not liked, when they're not connected. You can be connected directly with the God of heaven through His Son, and can enjoy a life full of meaning and purpose, and of huge benefit for other people. But to do that, you have to get serious, and trust Him, and follow Him as Lord.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, this has been a special radio edition of the interview with Dr. Lennox. If you want to see the entire interview, and I hope you do, look for the podcast coming this coming Tuesday, September 15th. Look for the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast or go to the Cross Examined YouTube channel to see the entire uncut interview with the great Dr.

John Lennox. Also, let me remind you, this Monday night, Lord willing, I will be at the University of Georgia. And we are going to be doing Jesus versus the war on reality. Everybody is welcome. Check our website, crossexamined.org. We'll also stream that live on our YouTube channel. I hope to see you there. See you next time. God bless.

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