

EXTENDED CUT – My Story: A Spiritual & Intellectual Journey with John Lennox

September 15, 2026

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm here at St. Ebbe's Church with not only one of my favorite, no, no, my favorite apologist, but also one of my favorite people of all time, the esteemed, wonderful Dr. John Lennox. Dr. Lennox, I can't tell you how good it is to see you after it must be 15 years since we were in the presence of one another. You came to our house in Charlotte many years ago, and that was one of the highlights of my life to have you and Sally over our house for dinner for New Year's Eve. It was wonderful.

JOHN:

Well, we enjoyed that, Frank. I remember it so clearly and well when I've forgotten many things. We've had such good experience in life with our friends in the U.S. So it's lovely to welcome you here to Oxford.

FRANK:

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 around 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

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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 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.

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3.4 billion letters long is 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, 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, 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.

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

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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 in debates and in your biography friends if you don't have John

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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, eh 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.

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

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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, but it wasn't the end of it. At the end of the meal, he essentially ordered me to come to his

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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 have 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 the space to make up their own minds. And that's what I've done most of my life.

FRANK:

And that comes from your parents' upbringing because your parents were that way. They wanted you to read. They wanted you. 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.

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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.

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 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, "I 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.

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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've forgotten her surname, Margaret. And she is a world 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.

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.

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FRANK:

Was it longer than that?

JOHN:

Oh, 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.

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.

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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.

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 has 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

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with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

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.

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 they're evidence that they're wrong.

FRANK:

And it seems to me, John, that Christianity is the answer to the problem of evil. We wouldn't even need Christ to come into this world to take evil upon Himself if sin had never occurred.

JOHN:

Oh, well, absolutely, and you see, removing God from it actually compounds the problem, because, and Richard Dawkins is totally inconsistent on this, and he kept at it for a long time, saying that this universe is just like you'd expect it to be if at the bottom there's no good, no evil, no justice. DNA just is, and we dance to its music. He doesn't really believe that because he immediately talks about faith in God being the greatest evil there is.

[FRANK]:

That's right.

JOHN:

And I prefer to listen to Dostoevsky rather than Dawkins. And Dostoevsky pointed out that if God doesn't exist, everything is permissible.

Meaning not that atheists can do no good, but there's no rational ground for the distinction between good and evil. If there is no God, if there's no gold standard there, and people, some of them, eventually begin to realize that. And it's interesting. One of the most interesting writers around these days is Tom Holland, the historian.

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And his path to conversion, which is what it is, is thinking about values. He used to think they all came from Greece and Rome, and then he was really shocked to discover they came essentially from Christianity, from the gospel. And he writes this marvelous book called Dominion that everybody ought to read because it's powerful, life-changing evidence. That the heart of it all is actually the biblical worldview.

FRANK:

Well, we see that here. We're in the UK right now. We're in Oxford, John, and you pointed out earlier how we're made in the image of God, and that our values come from Christianity, and Islam is making headway here in the West, and of course, there's lots of differences, but probably the biggest difference that we can talk about is, of course, they believe in God, but they don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

The Quran says he never died; he was taken straight to heaven. Of course, this is written 600 years after the fact. But in the West, if we want to convince our Muslim friends that Christianity is true, what evidence would you give them to say, "Hey, you ought to look at the resurrection." What evidence is there for the resurrection?

JOHN:

Well, first of all, when we're talking about other religions, particularly the monotheistic Abrahamic faiths as they're called, we need a preface to all of this, because the moment you start to talk about the differences between religions, people get a bit nervous.

Because they feel that your criticism is rejection. In particular, they think that you're looking down on them morally and ethically. And I find in any discussion like this, the moment this question comes up, I say, "Just wait a minute," because it is the fact, even in the Bible, that people who didn't believe in God, put to shame those who did.

Famous example of Pharaoh and Abraham and so on. And therefore, what I'm saying to you is, in discussing these differences, we must realize that what I'm not trying to do is to say that you have worse ethical standards than I have. And in fact if you investigate every religion and philosophy there is, as C.S. Lewis found in the 1940s, you'll find an equivalent of the golden rule. So I'm not making that critique, but the fact is that if you leave my convictions out of it, that is Christianity, you won't agree with each other. Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and so on. You won't agree with each other, and you'll admit calmly and clearly in public, as you've every right to do, that there are profound differences. So, if we take the three monotheistic religions, you have my Jewish friends who believe that Jesus died and didn't rise. My Muslim friends believe that he

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didn't die, and I believe that he both died and rose. Now, elementary logic tells me that only one of those can be true.

And that's simply factual. And what I find when I do this in public that if there are Muslims there, as I hope there often are, they will say, "Yes, you're right. So we have a different view. So how can we settle questions like that?" And then I raise the question of evidence and what it is and what it isn't, and try to give them some of what I believe is the evidence for the resurrection, but I find when it's done in that ethical context, that takes a lot of the heat out of it because there's that feeling you're getting at us because of our ethical stance. No, I'm not. I'm talking to you about facts of history, and we need to be prepared to face the evidence. And you need to be free to make up your own mind about it. And so I lay it out, but that's now far too long a thing to begin to do now.

FRANK:

Oh yes, I understand. We'll put some links in the show notes.

JOHN:

You, as I understand it, are very well known for your ability to talk about the resurrection in these kinds of contexts.

FRANK:

Well, we've just updated the book *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, John, and we've quoted you several times.

JOHN:

Oh, have you really?

FRANK:

So—

JOHN:

Oh, well, I must have a look at that. I read the original version.

AD:

Isn't Dr. Lennox wonderful? Yeah, one of the reasons he's wonderful, ladies and gentlemen, is he not only has a PhD in mathematics; he has a PhD in philosophy.

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

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

I don't know if you knew that, and you can get better schooled in philosophy because philosophy undergirds everything that we do. It's the study of why things are the way they are, because we're about to start. Actually, it's just started, the history of ancient and medieval philosophy by one of the greatest philosophers of the past century, my mentor, Dr. Norman Geisler.

We went back, and we got his old teaching from about 10 years ago, and we've upgraded it; we've enhanced it, and we made it into a course. You can still join the course. Go to crossexamined.org, click on online courses. You will see it there. And philosophy will help you understand how to better present arguments and how to better deal with the counterarguments that so many people bring against Christianity.

This course will help you do it. The history of medieval or history of ancient medieval philosophy with Dr. Norman Geisler. Sign up for the premium version so you can ask questions of Dr. Richard Howe. I'll jump in on some of that Q and A as well. Also want to mention coming up this weekend, Lord willing, on September 20th, I'll be at first September 20th I'll be at First Baptist Church in Lebanon, Missouri. That is near Branson, Missouri.

Be speaking at the morning services and then we'll do an afternoon session as well. Plenty of Q and A. Then the next night we're starting a brand new TV series that we'll begin to record. It'll be broadcast on YouTube. It's The War on Reality, based on our new book with Phoenix Hayes. The War on Reality is everywhere. How can you get people to understand what reality really is and bring them back to reality, that's what we'll be talking about.

By the way, thanks to so many of you who have put our book at the top of the apologetics list on Amazon and also the social issues list. It's done very well due to you. Thank you. It's got very good reviews. So if you haven't gotten The War on Reality book yet, please go to Amazon or Christian Book. You might get it faster at Christian Book because Amazon's kind of run out of them. Go to Christian Book and get The War on Reality and we're going to be We're going to be talking about it the 21st at 7:30 on our YouTube channel.

If you're anywhere near Charlotte, North Carolina, it'll be up at Freedom House Church in Cornelius, North Carolina. Everybody's welcome. 7:30 on the 21st. Then next weekend, Lord willing, I'll be at Grace Church of Sahuarita. I don't know if I'm saying that rightly, but it's just south of Tucson, Arizona. All day on the 27th. Next night, we're going to be at Arizona State University in Phoenix, Arizona.

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

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

If God, why evil? I hope you can join us. If you can't join us in person on our YouTube channel, again, the Cross Examined YouTube channel. The following week we will be at, Lord willing, Baylor University in Waco, Texas. That is October 5th, and there is a lot more on the calendar. Check it all out there. Now let's go back to the great Dr. John Lennox. Here he is.

FRANK:

I just want a couple more topics, John, that are central to your ministry and have been for so many years, and that is the issue of science. And you have so many wonderful illustrations to communicate to people that they're making a mistake when they say that science has somehow disproven God. Give us a mistake or two that they've made when they say things like that.

JOHN:

Well, first of all, science is a set of intellectual disciplines that concerns itself with understanding what we call the natural world, and that's a mistake in a sense, because what do you mean by natural? C.S. Lewis defined the word "natural" as that which appears of its own accord.

The universe didn't; it was created. But let's leave that aside for a moment. The way I approach this is to look at the history of science, particularly modern science, and then to look at the philosophy of science, how it works, and then finally to look at the results of science. And I've written a fairly major book on this, and indeed, that's Cosmic Chemistry: Do God and Science Mix?

But you may not know that I've written a book for young people on God and science. Do we have to choose? And there's been a huge response to that because I find even adults are reading it, and it's much shorter. But fundamentally, I start with history because if we ask where modern science came from and look at the pioneers, start with Galileo, Kepler, Newton, Clark Maxwell, Faraday, a whole lot of others; they were all believers in God.

FRANK:

Many of them were here at Oxford or Cambridge.

JOHN:

Well, some of them were, yes, and they were believers in God. So one thing's obvious, that their faith in God didn't hinder their science. It was the motor that drove it. And I often quote Lewis, who said, summing up the view of Alfred North Whitehead, a famous American mathematician and process theologian philosopher, "men became scientific," wrote Lewis, "because they

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to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek PODCAST

expected law of nature, and they expected law of nature because they believed in a legislator, a lawgiver," and that connects the biblical worldview with the science worldview.

So I often say to people, "Look, for these pioneer thinkers, they didn't see any opposition or difficulty because doing science was, in a sense, following the fingerprints of God, and even Galileo talked about God revealing it to us in the language of mathematics, and so did Kepler." And so historically we've got this close relationship between the biblical worldview and the rise of modern science, that is, 15th, 16th centuries.

That's number one. Number two, a lot of heat could be taken out of this if people realized what the word explanation means, because there are different kinds of explanation. And you get the silly notion, which we now call scientism, that science is the only way to truth, and that contradicts itself in its statement.

The statement "science is the only way to truth" is not a statement of science. So if it's true, it's false. And great Nobel Prize-winning scientists have seen that. In other words, what they've seen positively is that science is limited. As Sir Peter Medawar, who Nobel Prize winner at Oxford, wrote, "it's very easy to see that the natural sciences are limited in that they cannot answer the simple questions of a child: Where do I come from?"

Where am I going? What is the meaning of life? You have to turn to literature, and philosophy," and I would add, and to theology and religion to learn about that. Now that limitation, realizing it, is extremely important. Part of it is understandable through the difference between how and why.

If I say, "Look, I see a kettle boiling, steam coming out of it," and I say, "Why is the kettle boiling?" A physicist might say, "Well, let me explain it in terms of transfer of heat from the gas flame through the kettle base, agitating the molecules of water. That's why it's boiling." And I say, "Actually it's boiling because I want a cup of tea." Now, even a 10-year-old can understand that these are two different kinds of real explanation.

One is a scientific one. The other is a personal one in terms of human agency and need and so on. And then I say to kids, "Which one is true?" And they say, "But sir, you're being silly. You need both of them." Now isn't it amazing that a 10-year-old child can see that, but Richard Dawkins cannot. He thinks that the science one is the only one. And we need to push into that, that science cannot answer the bigger questions.

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to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

People have been drinking tea for thousands of years and not bothering about heat equations and heat transfer. In a sense, that's the more important answer, but it sits together with the other one. And I often formulate it and say, "Look, God no more contradicts science as an explanation for the universe than Henry Ford contradicts automobile engineering as the explanation for a motor car engine." They're complementary, and if people could see that, it would take a great deal of heat out of it, huge amount of heat out of it.

But they can't see it because they have to say that the why question and in particular the why of purpose. Of course, there's the why of function that belongs with the how. Why is that bit here for the function? The why of purpose, you cannot answer it in terms of the natural sciences, but it's a real and meaningful question.

And it's the most important question, as dear old Aristotle pointed out. And getting things like that across, I find begin to take the heat out, and people can begin to think that, look, what sort of explanation are we talking about? And then I push, and I say, "What is gravity?" And they try their best and say it's a force between two heavy objects and all that.

I said, and then they talk about the law of gravity, "And what does it explain?" Oh well, they say "it explains what gravity is." I said "It does not and Newton realized that." The law of gravity doesn't tell you what gravity is at all. It gives you a mathematical way of calculating the force between heavy objects. It doesn't answer the question of what gravity is, which means that often explanations that are thought of as scientific are not full in any sense. Most of them are not. So we need to be very careful with the word explanation, which is why I've written this book for young people to try and get some of these very simple to understand ideas across that anybody can use, whether they're of a scientific bent or not.

FRANK:

Well, if we're honest John, even adults will admit that we read kids' books in order to understand because in order to write a kid's book, you have to know how to say it simply. And you do. What's the name of that book again?

JOHN:

Science or God: Do We Have to Choose?

FRANK:

John Lennox has written, ladies and gentlemen, over 30 books. That's one of them. But I want to read one thing from the autobiography, and the beauty of the autobiography, ladies and

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to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

gentlemen, is that you not only get these nuggets of wisdom, but you get them within the context of a story where you said these and to other people in debates and conversations.

You say this in the book about science. You say, "Science takes things apart to see how they work. Religion puts things together to see what they mean."

JOHN:

But that's a quotation from Lord Sacks, who was our former chief rabbi here. And he read a book by our current polymath Doctor Iain McGilchrist.

FRANK:

Yes, you mentioned him in the book too.

JOHN:

Yes, Iain McGilchrist is a genius who studies the two halves of the brain. And what he has discovered in his remarkable book, which is too heavy to hold, almost, he calls it the matter with things, and what he's discovered is fascinating that the two halves of the brain they're involved in every cognitive event, but they pay attention to the world in two very different ways.

The left side of the brain pays attention to the logic, and we often talk about he's a right-brained nerd. He's into electronics and all the rest. Whereas the right brain sees the bigger picture, the more arty perception of beauty and all this kind of thing. And then what he says is this: What has happened historically for the last 500 years we've paid such attention to the left brain that we now live in a world where we understand how almost everything works, but we know the meaning of nothing.

So we need to bring in the right brain, and it's been most interesting in watching him move. He's become a Christian recently, Iain McGilchrist. Absolutely. And Jonathan Sachs read an earlier version of his book. It's called *The Master and His Emissary*. Well worth reading McGilchrist's book. And Jonathan Sachs responded by saying, "Aha. I've, I've got it. Science takes things apart to see how they work. Religion puts them together to see what they mean." And I quoted it in the book because Jonathan Sacks was one of the great thinkers of the 20th and early 21st century. An absolute genius. Always well worth reading.

FRANK:

Well, you'll get these nuggets in the autobiography. That's why I just find it so such a compelling read. In fact, I was just at the British Museum the other day, John, and a friend of mine stuck a

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

with Dr. Frank Turek PODCAST

camera in my face, and he says, "I put these out on YouTube. Tell me a book that you're reading now that has greatly influenced you." And I recommended the autobiography because you get your whole life in about 700 pages, highlights, and you have lived a life so well, in my view anyway, and I think judging by the scriptures, that's true.

Let me just ask you two more things because I don't want to keep you too long, but I know our audience loves hearing from you. 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've 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 that people are people, and we must show personal empathy and 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. 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.

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

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

"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 at 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?

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

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to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

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, 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, and cook 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 find 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 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 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.'"

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to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

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, it at work, in the lives of other people. So I just wish everybody that's watching this, God bless you and use you. We need you desperately in the world today, where young people feel that they've failed when they 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.

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to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

[FRANK]:

Amen, sir.

JOHN:

No, thank you so much.

FRANK:

Thank you for such a well-lived life. We hope there's many more years and many more books, but the writing of many books makes one weary, John. And we're going to put the books, links to John's books in the show notes, but get the autobiography, if nothing else, right now, ladies and gentlemen. You're going to learn so much from that about how to live a life, as a Christian ambassador. Thanks for being with us. Thank you, John.

JOHN:

My pleasure, and God bless you.

FRANK:

Amen, sir.

JOHN:

Thankfully, you're a bit younger than me, so you've got a bit more life—

FRANK:

But we're both in the fourth quarter, John.

JOHN:

Yes.

FRANK:

We're both in the fourth quarter.

JOHN:

Okay, thank you, sir.

FRANK:

Thank you, sir.

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