

# 24-0724wc Transcript

**24-0724wc - Christian Apologetics, p65, Tom Freed**

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## 24-0724 Wed. Class - Christian Apologetics, p65

Transcript (0:04 - 20:36)

### Transcript

**Teacher:** Tom Freed

Good evening. Good to see everybody. We started with chapter 12, the last time I taught, so there's only two chapters left.

The chapters are kind of long, so it might be a couple of months, but we're wrapping it up soon. So, people have serious issues with Christianity. Sometimes these are expressed as skeptical objections.

Other times they are more mildly expressed as earnest questions. The unbelievers you encounter will present you with many of the same defeaters, such as a problem of evil or restrictive nature of Christianity, of the Christian morality. Keep in mind that everyone you talk to is a unique individual who has a unique perspective and a unique set of reasons for rejecting Christianity.

Like the book says, everybody is different. You can't approach everybody the same way. I mean, we all probably got saved in different ways.

So, because of this, our goal is not to give a universal map for answering each defeater, but you can memorize them mechanically and recite it. As we discussed in chapter 5, you shouldn't give everyone the same map. You will draw many different maps.

So, our goal is that while keeping the inside-out approach in mind, learn trajectories for responses that you can personalize when you are drawing a map to answer a particular set of challenges of Christianity. So, we're going over the questions people ask. They call them defeaters.

Christianity will give pretty good answers, but you still probably have to tailor your response to different people. So, we looked at Defeater 1, Christianity is too restrictive. It denies people the opportunity to flourish by following their heart.

So, I don't know if any of you have heard that. Even as a Christian, I don't know if anybody has felt like it's too restrictive. I mean, sometimes you feel like, oh, man, I can't do anything.

Every single thing I do is a sin. So, it can be restrictive in ways. So, a common view of Christianity is that it takes the fun out of life.

Because it seems like Christianity continually tells us what we cannot do. Many see God as nothing but more than a cosmic killjoy. So, as we saw in chapter 3, this contempt for Christian morality isn't new.

Even in its earliest days, Christianity was known for ethics that the surrounding culture found strange and even dangerous. So, even from the start, they found Christianity weird in the way the Christians acted. Even today, the same thing.

But since it's easy to understand why unbelievers have often seen Christianity as too restrictive, you might tactically respond to this objection. I can understand why you see Christianity this way. But I wonder if you might hear me out.

Because while Christianity does include ethical norms that may seem strange, simply obeying a bunch of rules is not the heart of the Christian message. Jesus himself taught that he came not to suppress people and to steal their joy, but to free them from the shackles of the world, the flesh, the devil, and the devil, so that they can truly flourish. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full, John 10, 10.

At the same time, however, part of the reason people see Christianity as a straitjacket is that many in the late modern era had to find flourishing in a way that blinds them to the beauty of Christ's offer. You can see that today. They define flourishing as everything against the Bible.

Oh, I want to make all this money and have sex with anybody I want and party and do all this other stuff. That's how people see flourishing. But to God, that's completely against what he teaches.

Jesus offers the best life in many ways that humans think flourishing. They might be flourishing. It brings nothing but pain and suffering in the long run.

Just like the Bible says sin can be fun for a season, that to that it leaves a problem with addiction and a hard life. In Hebrews 11.25, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Sin can be fun.

I'm sure you all know. Hopefully not as a Christian. You don't know how fun sin is, but in your life, hey, sin can be great.

It can bring pleasure, but it only lasts a short time. One way people think they can flourish is expressive individualism. According to this belief, human flourishing occurs when we follow our heart and cast off external norms to find our authentic self.

Even though expressive individualism may be related to a number of positive developments, there are several reasons it proves unstable as a basis for human flourishing. The first point is it corrodes life-giving interpersonal relationships that require commitment and sacrifice. Family, friends, and marriages are viewed instrumentally and are quickly abandoned if they cease to serve the means for self-actualization.

There is little motivation to make long-term commitment to anyone. We see that a lot today. That's probably why the divorce rate is so high.

People feel like, oh, this isn't benefiting me. I'm just going to move on. I don't have to commit.

I don't have to sacrifice. I'm just going to do the best for me. If I feel like my wife, kids, and other close friends are restricting my ability to pursue what my heart tells me, why should I continue to devote myself to them? I'll put up with them only as long as it benefits me, and whatever benefits they provide outweigh the obligations to them.

How many in the world think this? Everything is transactional. A lot of things are transactional now. Friendship, even marriage.

A lot of people don't go off of love. They go off of, well, how does this benefit me? Does the man provide? A lot of times if the husband doesn't provide, she'll leave or not get the emotional stability. Or maybe a man might get bored or want to move on.

Like I said, nowadays you can see how many marriages and how many friendships and everything else. We learn in life, however, that saying no to a lot of desires of our heart is essential for deep, life-giving relationship that aligns more with Christian teachings than the world. As Christians, we know that out of the heart comes a lot of evil things that shouldn't be followed, Matthew 15, 19.

Out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander. So imagine if everybody just followed their heart. I mean, I'm constantly thinking of things I shouldn't do.

Imagine if I just said, oh, I'm going to do whatever my heart desires. I mean, this whole world would be a disaster. A lot of times sacrificing saying no to things is the best way to go.

That's not what the world teaches. Somebody I listen to, he's kind of like a workout guy, motivation guy, but he made a great point. A lot of times you grow from taking things away and sacrificing, not from adding things to your life.

So take away certain foods that are bad. Quit watching as much TV, Internet, video games. You're going to grow a lot more.

It's not about always adding. Well, this concession opens the door to Jesus' teachings. It can be seen in a new light.

When Jesus tells us we must die to live and gives us rules to live by, he's inviting us to a deeper, truer kind of flourishing. He does offer the best life. He does have restrictions for our benefit, and we need to convey that to people in the world.

So the second point is perhaps the most accurate problem with this modern assumption that people are to look within themselves to find their true self is its impracticality. It is impossible to live out. We can't help but constantly look at those around us to learn what we should value and how we should legitimize our own significance.

We're always defining our lives in dialogue with our community. Our prominent example is the way we embrace and try to live out the hero narrative that our communities and traditions tell us. By ingraining such stories in us and in countless other ways, the communities we live in teach us to worship, what to seek in value above all else, whether it's money, beauty, power, intellect, or self.

We can see that all the things that people value nowadays, most of it's against the Bible. I mean, like I said, money. It says beauty, power.

You know, a lot of these things don't go along with Christianity. We all look to someone or something to identify and sense our identity and sense of worth. This leads to a third problem with denying Christianity the name of freedom.

The third point, though expressive individualism may promise us freedom, it cannot deliver on that promise because we all look to external sources for significance and affirmation which enslave us. If Jesus taught everyone as a master, if what a particular group of friends or your parents or a partner or your kids think of you as the most important thing, think of you as the most important thing to you, then you will build your life, your happiness, and your worth around them. Their responses to you will limit you and control your life.

If they reject you, if they let you down, or if they are taken away from you, your life will feel empty and you know it. You will do anything you can to avoid losing them or consider other things, good things but not ultimate things that will build our lives around, career, success, possession, security. These gods will restrict us, consume our time, and wreak havoc on our emotions.

If we make them ultimate, they will in the end not just let us down, they will destroy us. So we do, even as Christians, put a lot of things first. I know, even like me, I let the job get in the way.

I work the weekend sometimes, don't make everything. You know, we have all these material things and everything else in life that sometimes we put ahead of God in certain ways. We like, even just watching TV and all this other stuff, we like consume our time.

We'll look at a literary example, Sin is Idolatry. The Pearl by John Steinbeck is a novel about a poor pearl diver named Keno who discovers a pearl of immeasurable value. Gradually, Keno becomes obsessed with the pearl.

It ruins his life. He is nearly killed. His hut is burned down, and worst of all, he hurts his wife for trying to destroy it.

While Keno initially saw the pearl as a blessing he could sell to save his son's life, it ultimately becomes a curse, the reason that his son dies. Keno's greed and love of the pearl blind him to what really mattered to begin with, his love for his family. The story powerfully illustrates how something that is good as a means will transform into an evil that enslaves us when we make it an end to itself.

When Jesus promised his followers an abundant life, he wasn't telling them he would usher in a life of freedom from norms and submission. That is impossible. We all submit to or are enslaved by something.

Jesus, however, can paradoxically promise true freedom. John 8, 32-36, through submission, because he is the one person we are designed to submit to, the one person in whom submission results in true freedom, and freedom to become the people we are designed to be. That's a great point.

Only through Christ can we have true freedom. But to understand this, we need to only look at Jesus, the most free and satisfied human to ever live. So how does Christianity liberate? It is important to stress that Jesus' call to absolute allegiance goes much deeper than a list of rules.

For many, the idea of absolute allegiance will sound restrictive and totally off-putting. But this is why the previous section is so important. Commitment to something that restricts you and even enslaves you is unavoidable.

Everyone is a slave to something. According to Jesus, the only way we can be free is by submitting to him. Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it, Matthew 16, 25.

Consider what it costs to become an elite musician or athlete. Elite musicians and athletes have the freedom to play, create, and improvise in beautiful and exciting ways. However, in order to achieve this freedom, they must restrict themselves, giving up on just doing whatever they think or feel at any given moment.

Carefully following the instructions and examples of experts, musicians and athletes make countless sacrifices of their natural desires every day, whether it's giving up hours of time to practice or eating a certain diet. It's like what John said in his sermon. These athletes, when they compete, they sacrifice everything.

It's hard work. Your whole life for 20-plus years, you're going to be doing that all day, totally consumed with it. So all inspiring improvisation on the soccer field or the concert hall is only made possible by long hours of disciplined training.

True freedom comes through suppression. You can see this is true in many areas of our life. It's also true in ultimate ways.

We don't give our children rules to suppress them. We give them rules so they can live well. In the same way the Bible doesn't give ethical commandments to restrict people from flourishing, the very opposite is true.

God who is good gives commandments because they're the only way to truly flourish. God's rules point us to a deeper wisdom that leads to a virtuous life. He teaches us to become the ultimate exemplar of human flourishing, namely Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the perennial questions that transcend any one generation or culture. What is it like to be truest to our humanity, to flourish in life, to live in a way that leads to the good life? Christianity teaches that the answer to these questions is not an abstract system of lists and rules. It is a person.

During his time on earth, Jesus presented a breathtaking picture of the ideal human. He combined power with humility, innocence with courage, truth with generosity. The vulnerable and brokenhearted were drawn to him because of his compassion.

Those who hungered for truth flocked to him because he taught with authority like no other. The corrupt leaders feared him because he could not be tamed. He stood for justice while offering forgiveness to all, even to those who killed him.

Astonishingly, his own brother and Saul of Tarsus, both of whom were skeptical of his seemingly outlandish claims, came to worship him as a very embodiment of God. The irony at the heart of expressive individualism is that all human beings are slaves of something. In Western culture, we tend to see ourselves as rugged individuals constantly forging our way through life.

We desperately grasp for freedom, for complete freedom and self-determination, not realizing that we do so at the expense of our own humanity. In our quest for autonomy and self-determination, we fail to see the cosmic irony of our situation. We will never be able to escape our finitude.

But Christianity teaches something that is counterintuitive to late modern assumptions. In order to save your life, in order to be truly free, you must lose your life for the name, for the sake of Christ. The apologetic goal in this sort of discussion is to lift Christ high, praying others will see that they'll only ever find their true purpose and freedom if they seek Christ.

So that makes a great point. You know, people think they're free, but everybody is a slave to something. You know, everybody follows something as something as their God in this world.

It might as well be Christ. He offers the best life. He offers true freedom.

We'll stop here. We'll look at Defeater 2 next week, which is a Christian sexual optic is dehumanizing, and Christians are homophobic. So have you ever heard that? Nowadays they really push that in life, you know.

If you're a Christian, you're evil because you're homophobic. You exclude these people. Now it's transgender and all that.

You know, they even press it harder against Christian morals. We'll stop with a prayer. Thank you, Lord, for this day.

Thank you for this time to get together. Everybody that got here safely, watch over us. Help us through the rest of the week.

Watch over the sick and suffering. Watch over Jim. Help him recover.

Watch over Wally and Scott with their eye issues. And Sal with all her problems. And the rest of us.

We all have issues and struggles in life. You know them all, Lord. So help us.

Help us to do what's right. In Jesus' name, amen.