

24-0731wc Transcript

24-0731wc - Christian Apologetics, p66, Tom Freed

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24-0731 Wed. Class - Christian Apologetics, p66

Transcript (0:04 - 27:09)

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Teacher: Tom Freed

Good evening. Finishing up with the study. We've got two chapters left.

We're on chapter 12, Dealing with Defeaters, which is going over hard questions that we come across when we talk to others. If you haven't answered, you know, the book has answers, but you guys might have better answers. I'm sure you've come across some of these questions before.

If you've got a comment on what your answer would be or want to comment after you hear the book's answer is, feel free. I have some of my own stuff, but mainly going off of what the book I use says. So there's a lot of tough questions, you know, dealing with non-Christians in this day and age.

So the unbelievers you encounter will present you with many of the same defeaters such as a problem of evil or the restrictive nature of Christian morality. Keep in mind that everyone you talk to is a unique individual with a different perspective and a unique set of reasons for rejecting Christianity. The trajectory for responses that you can personalize when you're drawing a map to answer a particular set of challenges of Christianity.

We'll give the reason, but everybody's different. There's still a lot of people you have to tailor your response to how they are. So we looked at Defeater 1. Christianity is too restrictive.

It denies people the opportunity to flourish by following their heart. 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 more than a cosmic killjoy.

You ever hear that? Christianity is no fun. You can't do anything. Like I said, even as a Christian I sometimes feel like that.

Every single thing that's in, you know, that seems fun, but a lot of times the fun leads to trouble and consequences. So in the end there's a lot more pain than fun. Is this statement true that God is a killjoy? We all know as Christians that you can only have true freedom through Christ.

Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly, John 10. We all know here that living as a Christian there is no better thing. You know, we've all lived a sinful life, and I believe with God and doing what he says is a lot better.

We looked at how people think they can flourish through 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 why 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. They cease to serve as a means for self-actualization.

We're quick to give up on our marriage or family, friends, if it doesn't serve us anymore. We see that a lot today. There's little motivation to make any long-term commitment to anybody.

Second point, another problem with modern assumption that people are to look within themselves to find their true self is it's impractical. It's impossible to live it out. We can't help but constantly look to those around us to learn what we should value and what we should legitimize, how we should legitimize our own significance.

The communities we live in teach us what to worship, what to seek in value above all else, whether it's money, beauty, power, intellect, or self. We can see we're raised off of TV and people around us, what we should value, what we should hold in high esteem. Everything the world values is usually against God.

We all look to something or someone to identify our sense of self-worth. This leads to a third problem with denying Christianity the name of freedom. So 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.

As Jesus taught, everyone has a master. If what a particular group of friends or your parents or your partner or your kids think of you as the most important thing to you, then you will build your life, your happiness, and your worth around them. You'll be a slave to something in life.

It is your choice what that's going to be. So according to Jesus, the only way you can be free is 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.

The Bible doesn't give ethical commandments to restrict people from flourishing. The very opposite is true. God who is good gives us commandments because they are the only way to truly flourish.

God's rules point us to deeper wisdom that leads to a virtuous life. He doesn't give the rules to hold us back and make us miserable. He gives us so we can have the best life.

If we follow his rules, we'll have a great life. I mean, look at Jesus. He was the happiest, the most loving, the greatest person to ever live, and he followed God's word exactly.

Defeater number two, the Christian sexual ethic is dehumanizing, and Christians are homophobic. Have you ever heard this? Christians are evil because they don't accept homosexuality. I mean, that's huge enough.

You even saw at the Olympic ceremonies, you know, all the homosexuality they're pushing. They had the Lord's Supper, which they redid with, you know, transgendered people at the table and a woman who was some kind of goddess. But you can see how, you know, how anti-Christian the world is right now, all this symbolism and all these things they're pushing on us.

But they definitely, that's a huge one today. Look at the truth in tone. The modern social imagery has taught us, look inside yourself and be true to you.

This is led by extension to the idea that if you find yourself attracted to someone of the same sex, then you should embrace that as part of your identity in the same way you'd embrace your race or ethnicity. They say, oh, what's wrong with loving somebody of an opposite gender? Well, it's not wrong to love them, but it is wrong to have sexual relations with them. So unfortunately, in recent years, Christians in general have had a bad track record, not only in responding well to the issue of sexuality, but in living consistently themselves.

Well, that's also true. It's not just homosexuality that's wrong. It's also any kind of sex outside of marriage.

So great wisdom and tact will be needed both in how we respond to the issue publicly and how we speak to individuals who have been deeply hurt by inflammatory rhetoric. So it is wrong, but also, you know, it's probably not the best way to go about it with these people and go to these protests and say, oh, you're all going to hell, and screaming at them on the other side, you know. There's probably a better way to do it.

At the same time, however, we must not forget that love and truth are inseparable and that sacrificing one and the same, one in the name or the other, only undermines both. We'll look at our assumptions and some basics. As you think about the issue and engage with those who are unsettled or even angry about the stance Christians take on it, keep in mind that we should be the first to admit that Christians, particularly when influenced by certain traditions and cultures, can and have misrepresented the Bible.

Nevertheless, there are a variety of reasons to give us confidence that God's creation ideal is for sex to be uniting and potentially procreating between a man and a woman within the context of marriage. A significant point often overlooked in street-level discussions is that both Jesus and Paul appeal to the creation order when discussing marriage. So that's a great point.

There's some good verses in the Bible, but I never, you know, considered Jesus because he doesn't outright say homosexuality is wrong, but he does say the right, you know, between a man and a woman to get married, which excludes everything else. So this is significant because even though Jesus did not teach specifically on homosexuality in the Gospels, by referencing the Genesis account when he answers a Pharisee's question about divorce, he rules out homosexuality. Look at Matthew 19, 3-6.

Some Pharisees came to test him. They asked, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason? Haven't you read, he replied, that at the beginning the Creator made them male and

female and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one.

Therefore, while God has joined together, let us not separate. I can see that Jesus completely agrees with Scripture, that we all know that he would, but he does make it apparent here that it only should be between a man and a woman. The same can be said of Paul, who references the creation account and direct relation to homosexuality.

Romans 1, 26 and 27. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts, even their women exchanging natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another.

Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves a due penalty for their perversion. So Paul makes it completely clear here that homosexuality is wrong. There's other Old Testament verses also.

And you might even hear people, I've heard a lot of people say, oh, it's not in the Bible, you know, that God's against homosexuality, which they're completely wrong. I mean, a lot of people don't even know the Bible, but I've heard that before. But there's plenty of verses, you know, there's a handful of leads that talk directly against it.

And nowadays you have, you know, gay people as preachers or certain things like that. So it's really, really kind of going off the deep end. Jesus and Paul both assumed that God's binary design of humans was intentional and that he instituted marriage as a union of man and woman.

Homosexuality, homosexual relations go against God's design. In warning us against this type of relationship, God is not seeking to hurt us. He forbids homosexual relationships because he desires us to live according to his good design so that we can be free and flourish.

Crafting a response in some situations, you might explain how Matthew 19, 1 through 12, Genesis 1 through 2, and even Romans 1, 18 through 32, outline God's beautiful design for marriage and sex as being between a man and a woman. Also adding that this has been universally taught by the church for nearly 2,000 years. Of course, someone could easily object that they don't believe in the Bible and don't care about Christian tradition.

Fair enough, you might respond. I explain this in hopes that you might try to be sympathetic to my position. Jesus is my Lord.

I obey and follow him. He has told us the type of sexual relationships he created for humans. And he calls on his followers to trust and obey him.

So that's what I aim to do. That's a good response. You know, they think they're right and they might get angry at us.

But all we're doing is following God's law, you know. It's not our, you know, whole thing that we made up on our own to be against homosexuality. I mean, most of us probably don't care for the most part as long as they don't bother us.

I mean, we should be telling them because they are in a sinful relationship. But nowadays people do get angry, you know. They might even attack you if you're against homosexuality.

But the bottom line is, you know, God created us. We're trying to do our best to follow his word. We know it's sinful.

So we speak against it. You know, after all, you know, he is God. He knows the best for us.

You know, he knows the best for everybody. So the Bible is the truth and it does give us the right way to live. So one problem is the issue of authority.

On many occasions it can be proven to respond to this objection by pointing to the authority of Jesus. You might start by asking, would you say the belief that Jesus rose from the dead is contingent on what he said about marriage? In other words, do you not believe in the resurrection because you don't like what Jesus said about sex? They will likely respond, well no, that's not what I'm saying. I don't believe in Jesus, Jesus' resurrection for other reasons.

This will allow you to discuss the resurrection of Jesus. This is probably the root of many of our differences. I believe he did rise from the dead and that he is the savior of the world.

So I trust his teachings. Would you be open to talking more about this? That could be a way to talk about the resurrection, talk about Jesus, talk about the evidence. I mean, we believe it because not only by faith, but there is a lot of evidence.

You know, you've got to look at the evidence. I listened to this one great, I guess you'd say, apologist on YouTube and he said, why follow the evidence? You know, it isn't just completely faith. We have firsthand accounts.

We have more written about history about Jesus than anybody else. You know, we can look at creation. We can look at many things that point to God, that he does exist and that Jesus is the son of God.

The potential strength of this is that it enables you to point to Jesus rather than just to focus on one kind of sin. On the other hand, we should not imagine that an unbeliever can somehow make a simple, logical decision about the resurrection completely detached from the moral and emotional, emotive factors involved in making up their mind about Jesus. As the atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel has admitted, he's not indifferent to religious questions.

I don't want there to be a God. I don't want the universe to be like this. Nagel is expressing a fundamental issue that plagues discussions about God.

As humans, we fear losing control. So we're all aware of implications of submitting to someone as Lord. Considering this, when we discuss Christian morality with an unbeliever, we should avoid assuming that Jesus' teaching is good in a false hope that we can persuade them with a strictly rational appeal.

If we decide to focus first on reasons to accept Jesus' authority, we'll likely need to circle back around to defend his vision for sexuality. Two is dying to live as sexual beings. We live in a culture where sex is free and seemingly unbounded.

Sex has been placed on such a high pedestal that to suggest what we are claiming about sexuality seems old-timey, prudish, and even irrational. In our culture, the mantra of many is, if it feels good,

do it. But the Bible calls us to something higher and more sacred and gives us these guidelines to help mold us into a certain kind of person to truly flourish.

That's completely true. You know, we are looked at as old-fashioned. Many people think, oh, you can't expect somebody not to have sex before marriage, or you can't, you know, be that restrictive.

But the Bible is. It does teach us that. Christians have long recognized that different sins have different consequences.

And yet the underlying issue of all sin is the same. It is us saying to God, no, I'm going to do it my way. I think of Frank Sinatra's song like that.

I did it my way, you know. And even as Christians we do this. Oh, God, I know you say this, but, you know, I know better.

I'm going to try my way. I've done that. Well, you're not answering my prayer, you're not doing it how I want it, so I'm going to do it on my own.

And that always leads to disaster. Look at this country. Look at how things have changed.

You can't tell me that it's better how people are acting now, the morality and everything going on, than it was, you know, even 20, 30 years ago, let alone 100 years ago. Look and see, we're in moral decay, and a lot of it does come from sexuality and sexual sin. So every sin, from a little white lie to a ruthless murder, is rooted in a worship of self over God.

We want to make our own rules. We want to follow our own way. We think we know best.

It was this posture toward God that set the world wrong to begin with, resulting in the disordered and broken creation we now live in. That's true. It was Adam and Eve that went their own way.

Even Cain. God gave him a chance to do what was right, and instead he committed murder. But since the beginning, man going against God, thinking their way is best, has led to nothing but death and destruction.

So it is this posture toward God that now separates us from him. The good news Jesus Christ brought is that God desires us to return home and reunite with him, restoring our relationship to what it was originally meant to be. God is not singularly against anyone's sins.

He is against all things that stand against his creation's borders. His authority, our relationship with him, and his good plan for the world. God's plan for human sexuality includes two options.

Either a lifelong committed marriage between a man and a woman, or a life of singleness. Both options, just like any of the choices we make in life, mean saying yes to some things and no to other things. Both paths call for discipline and obedience.

But according to Christianity, these are the only true ways to have true joy and have human flourishing. Of course, this does not mean these two paths will always feel right. At times, a married person's sexual instincts might tell them to sleep around.

At times, a single person might feel so lonely that they deeply desire to use sex to find physical and emotional intimacy. Thankfully, even when we step off God's intended ways on our own paths, grace remains and redemption is available. That's true.

A lot of times, you know, even in a committed, loving marriage relationship, you will think about maybe going astray. You look at how many marriages separate nowadays when somebody cheats. It's not easy.

It's not easy being single either. I mean, it's like tons of temptation, tons of, you know, just physical needs or wants. So, you know, we are going to make mistakes.

We are going to screw up. But, you know, we know Jesus will forgive us. He will take us back as long as we repent and try to do what's right.

So when we turn to Jesus, we find forgiveness, not condemnation, 1 John 1.9. As we saw earlier, we cannot trust our own feelings and urges or even the way we are wired to lead us to the good life, a life where we know our Creator and live out our true meaning and purpose. Jesus calls us to say no to ourselves and yes to Him, trusting that His way is better than ours. Even if following Jesus makes us feel like we are dying, in the end, it is actually the only way we can truly live.

We'll stop here. We'll finish up with this next week. We'll have Defeater number three next week, which says, Christians are a bunch of hypocrites.

This includes many of the individuals I meet today and the way the Church has collectively mistreated people through history. These are some tough responses you might get. I mean, a lot of people are against the Church because they do believe we are hypocrites.

So we'll look at that. We'll basically finish up with that last Defeater, that Christians are homophobic. I don't know if any of you have come across that or have a good response to it.

I mean, it's definitely a tough issue we're dealing with because homosexuality has pretty much taken over in a way. I mean, they've become so militant and rampant. I mean, it's really, they've gone from just wanting equal rights and to be married.

Now they're pushing it down our throat. They're coming after the children. They're really causing a lot of moral decay and destruction.

So we'll finish with a prayer. Thank you, Lord. Another day to study your word.

We know it is a tough, tough world, and there are a lot of crazy things going on right now. But help us stay the course. Help us to be able to talk to other people about you, to have good responses, to be able to touch people's hearts and convert people.

Help us through the week. We all have problems we're dealing with. Thank you for bringing Jim back to good health.

Watch over Amy and their family. They continue to deal with sickness. Watch over Wally and Scott with their eye issues.

The rest of the congregation, we have a lot of people struggling and a lot of people that are sick. Help heal them. Help watch us through the week.

Get us here safely Sunday. In Jesus' name, amen.