

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

with Dr. Frank Turek    **PODCAST**

## **End the Stalemate | with Dr. Sean McDowell**

(July 12, 2024)

### **FRANK:**

Ladies and gentlemen, imagine watching 16 full length movies every day. Well, that's actually what you're doing, because the average person today possesses as much as 74 gigabytes of information a day, I should say, processes that amount of information a day, which is the equivalent of 16 full length movies. The information comes through computers, cell phones, tablets and other, of course, electronic enticements.

Now, consider that only 500 years ago, 74 gigs of information would be what a highly educated person consumed in a lifetime through books and stories. We are literally in a wash of information, and we often feel like we need to somehow communicate that information. We need to pass along more information. Yet when we do, it seems our nation and even many in our church get more and more divided from one another. Why is that?

Why are we divided, so divided? Why are people angry? And what, as Christians, can we do about it? How can we learn from other people? Maybe have conversations in such a way that they're open to learning from us and maybe we can come to an agreement on some things. I mean, if we're Christians and we want people to become Christians, we're hoping they agree to realize that Christianity is true.

What do they want us to learn if they're non-Christians, as Christians? Can we learn from them? I think we can. The question is, how do we do that in a way that breaks the stalemate, that ends the stalemate? Because right now people are canceling one another. We're not really dialoguing and we're just demonizing people who don't agree with us. Is that the way we ought to conduct ourselves as Christians? Of course not.

But how do we move forward? Well, my friend Dr. Sean McDowell, along with a colleague of his, have written a brand new book called 'End the Stalemate: Move Past Cancel Culture to Meaningful Conversations.' And if you follow Sean at all, you know he's one of the best

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interviewers that the Christian worldview has. He has people from all different walks of life on his YouTube program, and he interviews them.

And many of them, of course, don't agree with Christianity, yet he skillfully has conversations with them and draws them out and at least makes connections with them, so maybe they'll consider the Christian worldview. So, Sean and Tim Muelhoff have put together this brand new book that can help you do that. So, here he is, ladies and gentlemen, Sean McDowell. Dr. Sean McDowell. Sean, always great having you on the show. How are you?

**SEAN:**

Great intro, man, as always. I'm doing well, thanks.

**FRANK:**

Well, tell us this new book, 'End of the Stalemate,' I guess. I'm about 70% of the way through it. Very practical. Why did you decide to write it?

**SEAN:**

Well, first off, my co-author is an expert and a PhD. He's a professor in communications. He's worked with CRU. He's written a book with JP Morland, has a hear for evangelism and apologetics. He said to me, he goes, Sean, I've studied this stuff academically. He did his PhD at UNC, and it was on communicating across worldviews. And his, you know, doctoral committee, none of them were Christians. You have left leaning feminists. And he's trying to make connections and communicate across worldview differences.

So, he came to me, and he goes, Sean, I have kind of the scholarship in this, and I do this as well. You're kind of practicing this, like you said, Frank, on your YouTube channel and on stage and off stage. Would you write this with me? And instantly I thought, I have wanted to write a book like this for probably two decades.

Just never had the impetus to do so. And I think what really put me over the top was just this cancel culture moment we live in, where there's so much anger, there's so much division, there's so little willingness to listen to people sympathetically, to find common ground.

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And although Christians need to learn how to debate and advance their arguments, that's important. Always will be. I started thinking, here's something every Christian could do, their family members, their co-workers. We can be better at being, in a sense, peacemakers, you know, which is loving our neighbors. So, let's put pen to paper, so to speak, and write this thing. That was kind of the heart of the motivation at the beginning.

**FRANK:**

And it's divided up in chapters between a chapter you've written and a chapter that Tim has written. And there's so much good material in here that can help you be not just a better communicator, but a better listener, and better able to connect with other people. I think one of the more interesting things about the book, I say I'm about 70% of the way through it right now, is the admission that so often we somehow just can't imagine how somebody could disagree with us. How could anybody disagree with us and our position?

But you point out that people come to their worldview for many different reasons. Maybe you could go through some of the different ways or different reasons people arrive at what they believe and why they believe it. In fact, you have in one of the chapters here, Sean, you have a situation where you talk about interviews with a man by the name of Adam Davidson. And maybe you could just launch off with that story to show how people could have different beliefs than, say, you and I have.

**SEAN:**

So probably, I don't know, two or three years ago, I get an email from a fellow who wrote for the New York Times, writes now for The New Yorker, MSNBC, started Planet Money, who, somewhat tongue in cheek, describes himself as an atheist New York media elite and reached out to me and said, hey, I've been watching your stuff. I'd love to have a conversation. And just because the way I've been represented in the media and some of the biases in the media, it took me a while to finally respond. And I got back to realize this guy's really thoughtful, and he's charitable, and he's sincere.

I invited him on my channel and just interviewed him. I was just interested to hear his story and his worldview. And I could probably spend hours talking about this. We're actually going to write a book together, 'Point Counterpoint' on some cultural and apologetic topics. We're

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probably going to start this fall. But one of the things he said, Frank, that really jumped out to me is he said, you know, Sean, I grew up in Greenwich, Manhattan, which is the heart of where the sexual revolution and the LGBTQ movement began. And by the way, the irony Frank, you know this, is he's about my age. And there's probably nobody still alive who is more critical of the sexual revolution than my dad.

And so, here's two of us from contrasting experiences and worldviews becoming friends. That surprising element doesn't happen a lot. He said to me, he goes, Sean, I didn't know one, not a single evangelical growing up. Probably 40% of the men that I knew were gay. Now, look, he's also said, he goes, Sean, I probably don't agree with about anything politically that you hold or worldview. Like, we are about as diametrically opposed on those issues as possible.

But if we take a moment to put ourselves in his shoes, doesn't know any evangelicals, feels loved and cared for, all his friends have a very different worldview than we have. Well, of course he's going to see the world as he does. Of course he's going to have a certain perspective or potentially caricature of evangelicals because he doesn't know one. Because that's how we're presented in the media and that's his world.

So, a part of what we're saying about worldview in this book is not that understanding somebody's worldview makes us have less conviction or a desire to advance our own. But if we take the time to stand in somebody's shoes intellectually and stand in their shoes emotionally, I think we're going to communicate in a very different fashion than just standing on the outside attacking worldviews in some of the way culture warrior kind of language has done in the past.

That's a part of what we're saying in this book. And this is one of the unique things we could come back to called perspective taking. Just seeing the world as somebody else does but also feeling it as they do would transform our care for these people, and frankly, make us communicate more graciously, and ultimately more effectively.

**FRANK:**

Yeah. A question that the book brings out is how would you view politics, religion, economics, sexuality, education, race, or gender if you lived and grew up in, say, Greenwich Village, New York? Might you view things differently? That's a question, a legitimate question we'll dive into

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right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist., with me, Frank Turek. My guest, Dr. Sean McDowell. The new book, 'End the Stalemate.' We'll be back in two minutes.

How would you view the world if you were brought up in a different culture, in a different family, with a different worldview, with different friends? You'd probably have different beliefs right now. Doesn't mean the beliefs are right or wrong, but you might have different beliefs. So, if you weren't a Christian and some Christian wanted to convince you to become a Christian, they might have to take a different approach than, say, just assuming the Bible is true or just assuming certain political viewpoints are correct.

You might have to dig a little bit and figure out where that person is coming from. And that's what this new book can help you do. The book again by Dr. Sean McDowell and Dr. Tim Mueloff is called 'End the Stalemate: Move Past Cancel Culture to Meaningful Conversations.' Let's go back, Sean, if we can, to that situation with the gentleman from New York, a man by the name of Adam Davidson. He grew up in a completely sort of different worldview. And it reminds me of what my mentor, Dr. Norman Geisler, used to say.

He used to say that fraternity will nearly always overpower theology. Fraternity will nearly always overpower theology. And what he meant by that was personal relationships will nearly always guide what you believe about God, not in all cases, but in many cases. And we even see that in the Church now, Sean.

We see people who might have children that now identify as LGBTQ, basically throwing the Bible under the bus now in a way, in order to somehow what they believe to be, to love their child. And the question is, how do we navigate an issue like that? How do we have conversations with people that advance the ball rather than have people pick up their ball and take it home? And that's, I think, one of the reasons you wrote this book.

**SEAN:**

Well, I think Dr. Geisler's right about fraternity trumping theology. It also trumps politics. It also trumps philosophy. We have a chapter in the book about worldviews, and we talk about...

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*to be an* **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek    **PODCAST**

It's like a pyramid. At the top are our actions, and beneath that are our values. What we value shapes how we spend our time, and our money, etc. What shapes our values is our worldview. Our larger belief system shapes what we value, and that shapes the choices that we make. Well, then the question is, where does our worldview come from?

How do we get the worldview that we have? And we would all like to think that we just analyze things with pure objectivity and follow truth, but the reality is that what Geisler said is true for you, and for me, and for non-believers. We put at the bottom of that wrung, relationships. Relationships, relationships with other people.

So, I look at my worldview. Nobody has shaped my worldview more than my relationship with my father, my relationship with professors, with mentors, my relationships with authors at different times, even through reading their books. So, if our worldview is shaped through relationships, then if we want to influence other people, we would be wise to build relationships with them. It makes sense. That's what shapes people.

So oftentimes, if you have a caricature of a Christian and you meet a Christian who doesn't fit that, that's more powerful in shifting somebody's worldview than hearing an argument or seeing a study about a Christian. In fact, I heard our mutual friend Darryl Bach. It's been a decade ago at ETS. In fact, I think that year we were actually both there together, if I'm not mistaken. He was giving a talk, and he said, he said, you know, the narrative is increasingly that Christians are bigots, and hateful, and homophobic.

When people hear that and their next thought is, but I know a Christian, and he or she is not that way, that's when we can begin to shift the way people see the world. So, the point is not to get away from apologetics, or arguments, or to stop reasoning with people. We need to do that more and better than ever. But relationships shape how people see the world. And last thing I'll say behind this theologically is you think about, God communicates with us in a lot of different ways, right?

He communicates through creation, through conscience, angels, Scripture, through the Church, through prophets, but ultimately through the person of Jesus. When God wants to make Himself fully known, he enters into our world relationally so we can know Him personally. I

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*to be an* **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek    **PODCAST**

mean, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians chapter one, we not only gave you the gospel, which is truth, but our very own lives, relationship.

So, I would love to see Christians intentionally enter into relationships with people who see the world differently. That gives us an opportunity. And again, I'm not saying this is the only way we reach people. You and I write books. You and I do YouTube. We communicate in other fashions, but every single Christian can reach out and build relationships with those in the LGBTQ community, Muslims, Hindus, agnostics, and just enter into their world, and begin to love and care for them relationally, which gives us an opportunity to share what we believe about Jesus.

**FRANK:**

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to amplify something Dr. McDowell just said. On page 54 of the 'End of the Stalemate' book, or 'End the Stalemate' book, there is a little pyramid. Imagine the pyramid. Sean just described it briefly. At the very top of the pyramid is a section called behavior, and then right below behavior is a section underneath it called values. That's how people behave based on their values. But why do they have the values they have?

Right under that is a segment called worldview. They have a worldview that informs their values, which informs their behavior. At the very foundation of this pyramid, however, is the word relationships. And what Sean is saying here, that for many people, the way they get a worldview is through the relationships they have, which then leads to their values and their behavior.

And so, you might ask yourself, why is a person behaving in such a way? Why is this person supporting, say, this particular thing in the public square, this particular position, or acting this way personally? Well, it might, at the foundation, be a relationship issue. And in the book, Sean, you have a section in here that cites Paul Vitz. I think this is one of Tim's chapters. And Paul Vitz, an NYU professor, did research many years ago that he titled 'Faith of the Fatherless.' Can you unpack that for us? Because it may help us understand why some atheists believe in atheism.

**SEAN:**

Yeah. Paul Vitz grew up in a Christian home in the Midwest, and he believed his faith, but he was talked out of it interestingly enough. I believe it was in grad school in New York where he

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*to be an* **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

went to study psychology. And he said, nobody reasoned me out of my faith, But I went there, and I wanted to fit in, I wanted to be successful, so I learned how to dress, I learned how to act, I learned how to talk, and I just basically absorbed what to believe.

And basically, that was a secular worldview that had a certain disdain for Christianity. Here he is in New York in this elite place, and he's somewhat embarrassed of where he grew up in the Midwest, so distanced himself from it. It wasn't until his thirties, maybe even his mid-thirties, that he started to examine the faith more rationally, you know, a decade later and then came back to it.

So, it's the power back to what you said about kind of the environment that we're in, the relationships that we have can help us almost unintentionally just fade away from our beliefs rather than intentionally. And so, he turned to psychology to study atheism. And this is his book, Faith of the Fatherless. And he argues that when you look at Christians, you don't see any common background that drives people to faith. You have rich, you have poor, you have good relationships, poor relationships, black, white, you know, male, female, fill in the blank.

But when you look at some of the most influential atheists, people like Marx, and Camus, and Freud and Sartre, he said basically all of them either have a dead, distant, or harsh father. Now, he's not saying there's cause and effect that's here. It's never that simple. But it makes sense that we call God our heavenly Father. And whether we realize it or not, we import things from our earthly relationships horizontally onto our heavenly Father vertically. This was true for my dad, Frank.

You know, this in the conversation you've had with him is he grew up with an alcoholic father. And people would say things like, an abusive alcoholic father, you have a heavenly Father who loves you. And father in my dad's mind meant abusive, drunk, harsh. Why on earth would I want that? So, his relationships shaped his theology and his experience of God. And by the way, it's been a few years since I've seen this, so I assume it's true.

But I remember seeing a study, it maybe has been five or ten years that one of the top reasons non-Muslims would convert to the faith that are women is because they meet a guy who is a

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*to be an* **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Muslim, and he's charming, and he's likable, and he changes the perspective they have of Islam, and hence is one big step towards conversion.

So, we apologists sometimes can just say, truth, truth, truth. And I'm not ever saying downplay that. But the question we have to ask is, how does somebody best receive truth? What shapes what we think is true and what we're willing to entertain? And so much of that is shaped by relationships.

**FRANK:**

And especially a relationship with a father as Vitz's point, particularly when it comes to atheism. It was Pascal who famously said that people almost invariably base their beliefs not on the basis of proof, but on the basis of what they find attractive. So, you just mentioned a young girl finds a Muslim man attractive and that somehow then makes Islam attractive to her. Has she investigated whether or not Islam is actually true? No, probably not.

So, we are all quite frequently making decisions based on what we find attractive rather than what is necessarily true. And by the way, this can be true for Christians, right? I mean, Christians can do the same thing. I would say most Christians today, if you ask them, can you give me evidence that Christianity is indeed true? Most of them could not, but they in some way find Christianity attractive, some aspect of it. And that might be more of a reason why people are Christians than actually apologetic answers, apologetic reasons.

And, Sean, it reminds me, sometimes I get asked this question by people who watch some of our YouTube videos from college campuses. They say, Frank, how come you never get mad at these kids, even when they're hostile? And I say to them, look, I'm 62 years old now. When I was 22, I didn't agree with my 62 year old self.

So, why should I expect some 22 year old kid to agree with me now? In other words, I think we all ought to have the attitude, ladies and gentlemen, that we should expect people. Or let me put it another way, we shouldn't expect people to agree with us all the time. I don't know where this kid has come from. I don't know what background he or she has. I don't know what experience they've had. I don't know what they've read, what they haven't read. I don't know what their home life was or what has happened to them as children.

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*to be an* **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek    **PODCAST**

There's so many different ways that they have come to their worldview that I don't know about that. I just, I shouldn't be mad at them for not agreeing with me. And I think that's one of the things you do so well, is you're dealing with people who are not Christians and you're assuming that they ought not agree with you because you don't know where they're coming from.

You don't know what life experience they've had, what they've read, what they haven't read. What their upbringing was and all that. And so, I think we all need to kind of have that attitude with people and hear them out. And when we come back from the break, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to give you some practical ways that you can actually do this with people, because that's what the book does.

The book is very practical. It's called 'End the Stalemate' by Dr. Sean McDowell and Tim Muelhoff. And it'll provide you with some real practical ways to have conversations with people and move them toward the truth, the truth of the Christian faith. I'm Frank Turek. You're listening. I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Back in two minutes.

If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio, go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent anyway. You won't hear this on NPR. We're talking to Dr. Sean McDowell. His new book, 'End the Stalemate.' This will help you converse with people that don't agree with the Christian worldview. How can you do it skillfully? How can you have a productive conversation rather than a cancel culture one, which isn't a conversation at all?

Before I do, I want to mention a couple of things coming up on the 18th of July, Scott Klusendorf and I are going to do a program, a live stream that evening on how to convince people to be pro-life. And then the entire course that Scott will teach will unveil. It begins on August 5. And if you want to be a part of that, and I hope you do, you can sign up at [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org). Click on online courses. You will see it there.

By the way, there's several courses up there from our guest today, Dr. Sean McDowell, as well, that you can take in a self-paced way. But if you want to be a part of How to Convince People to Be Pro-life, and I hope you do, particularly in this election year, check out the July 18 event live

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*to be an* **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek    **PODCAST**

stream. And even if you don't see that, you can still sign up for the course. It begins August 5. Also want to mention I'll be at the Grounded Youth Conference here in Charlotte, North Carolina, on the 23rd of July. Details on our website.

Then I'll be at the TPUSA Believers Summit in West Palm Beach: myself, Seth Dylan, CEO of The Babylon Bee, Allie Stuckey, Charlie Kirk, Eric Metaxas, many others. That's down in West Palm Beach, the 26th to the 28th, going to be a great event. Then on the 29th, up in Bangor, Maine, 'Why Now? The Church.' I will be there with Erwin Lutzer and others. And then in Portland, Maine, on the 30th, 'Why Now? The Church' also with Erwin Lutzer and others. And we're going to be talking about why the Church needs to be engaged in culture, including politics.

So, check all that out. And then, of course, we have the CrossExamined Instructor Academy, the first through the third here in Charlotte, North Carolina. Sean, before the break, we were talking about why, you know, a lot of people ask me, why don't I get mad at kids, even when they're hostile on college campuses? And, you know, I said, well, you know, why should I expect people to agree with me? And I notice you never seem to get angry, either, even with unbelievers on your program. Why is that?

**SEAN:**

Well, I think one reason is you were sharing that you don't get angry. And I'd like to think it applies to me, is because you know, what you believe and why. If we don't know why we think the Bible is true and why Jesus is God and answers to theological questions and somebody asks us, we naturally get defensive because we don't want to be embarrassed.

But if we know what we believe and why we believe it, we're not threatened by challenges. Even if you get asked a question and go, you know what? I got to think about that. Here's my first response, but I'll get back to you. There's a certain confidence that comes from knowing what we believe and why. Now, with that said, my point is not, before you have a conversation, you've got to go read every book by Geisler, every book by my dad, William Lane Craig.  
[Laughter]

Then you'll never have a conversation with somebody. But the more we learn, there's a confidence that comes of that. That's why it's important to love God with our minds. But I think

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with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

there's another reason why we don't enter into just conversations with people who see the world differently, is we're afraid that just listening equals affirmation. Sometimes I feel like, as Christians, every time you say something I disagree with, politically or theologically, historically, I've got to correct it. And I just want to say, you know what? Choose your battles carefully.

Listening to somebody doesn't mean I'm affirming what they're saying. And releasing people of that enables us to just lean in with curiosity, with a desire to learn. I mean, there's a Proverb that says, you know, by wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established.

I think there's something incredibly powerful, Frank, about just, and you know this as much as anybody, just leaning in with somebody and saying, tell me your story. I want to understand, help me understand you. I mean, there's literally, like, neurons that fire in the brain and healing that takes place.

So, a part of the heart of this book was just a thought in my mind that, what if when somebody's life is broken, they're having questions? And you and I know a lot of people come to apologetics when they have a kid who questions the faith, or they go through crisis themselves.

What if people's first thought was, you know what? I need to find a Christian because a Christian will listen. A Christian will love me. A Christian will care for me. What if that was people's perception based upon their relationships with Christians? Imagine what opportunities we would have to speak truth into people's lives.

**FRANK:**

You know, your dad told you this once, Sean. And this is in the book again, 'End the Stalemate.' I'll quote it and then get your reaction to it. He said, when you read an article or book, always discern the assumptions of the person who wrote it. Their assumptions will shape everything they write. Now, here's my question. How has this advice helped you connect with people to be a better communicator with them?

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*to be an* **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

**SEAN:**

I remember when he told me that in high school. I thought, every song, there's assumptions behind it. Every movie, every book, every article, every professor. And so, first off, I want to find it just so I can understand why they believe what they believe. But I also want to probe further with that person and figure out, kind of like we were talking about earlier, why does this person see the world the way they see it?

So, you quoted a chapter I have in the book on worldviews and kind of mapping our experience. My co-author, Tim, has one on Brickellage, which is basically a term that describes how we get our worldviews. Relationships are key. Crisis points are key. Experiences we have are key. So, when I'm talking with somebody, I want to know what's the heart of the issue for why they see the world as they see it, what's going on beneath the surface.

You know, there's a Proverb that talks about the purposes in a man's heart are deep, and a man of wisdom draws it out. So, when I'm talking to someone of a different worldview, I want to get to the root of the issue. What's the heart of the issue, especially if it's a skeptic and we're talking about faith. I want to know why does this person really object to the Christian faith? Is it because they think contradictions are in the Bible or they think Jesus didn't rise from the grave? Maybe it's intellectual. That can be a piece of it.

But I had a young man one time for 45 minutes, was objecting to hell. And I pulled out every apologetic response I could give until finally he says something effective. You know, my dad died, and he was not a believer. If I accept the Christian worldview, I have to believe that my dad was in hell. This takes it from an abstract apologetic issue to a very personal issue for him. That's what I want to get at, and that was the power of my dad's observation. There's a story beneath the story. There's a heart to the question. I want to know what it is and then let's talk about that.

**FRANK:**

And it reminds me of the Proverb, which I think is one of the top, I call it the second most important verse in the Bible. Now, of course, the most important has something to do with the gospel. But Proverbs 4:23 says "Above all else, guard your heart, because everything you do flows from it." It doesn't say follow your heart. It says guard your heart. And I think when your

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*to be an* **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek      **PODCAST**

dad said to you, look at the assumptions behind what they're saying, there's something on their heart that they think is very important. It could have been the person you're talking to with regard to hell.

Well, my dad was important to me, and I think it's immoral that he's in hell. So, that person there is assuming a moral standard. In fact, I think that's the biggest assumption I see in most objections to Christianity, Sean. People are assuming a moral standard, and they think somehow Christianity is immoral. Even your friend Adam Davidson, the guy we talked about earlier, the New York elite journalist, I remember reading in the book again, the book is well worth getting, ladies and gentlemen. It's going to help you communicate with people. It's called 'End the Stalemate.' 'End the Stalemate' by Dr. Sean McDowell, my guest today, and Tim Muelhoff.

I remember in the book he said that Christians, in his view, he didn't know any evangelical Christians. But Christians in his view, were taking rights away from people. Rights. He's an atheist. Where does he get rights from? He's assuming that people have rights and he's assuming that these rights have to do with, say, same-sex behavior being recognized by the government. These are all assumptions that don't have any ground in an atheistic worldview. So, in my view, he's stealing the standard from God while claiming God doesn't exist. Now, how can you bring that out in a skillful way?

You have to have a relationship with him in order to do that if he's going to hear it. Right? But he's assuming a standard. And I see this so often. People are assuming a standard. Elsewhere in the book, Tim talks about people who experience depression and God doesn't heal them. But it seems like the assumption there is that God is under moral obligation to give them what they want. And if God doesn't, somehow, He doesn't exist or is immoral. And it may be. I mean, how do you skillfully bring this up to people without driving them off?

**SEAN:**

Well, that's an interesting question. I don't think there's one way to do it in every circumstance because you even look at how Jesus ministered to people differently. He had a certain wisdom. He had a way of engaging people. And the rich young ruler was maybe different than the woman at the well, for example. But one thing Jesus did is He asked questions. Do you know in

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the Gospels and Acts, there's 340 questions that Jesus asked? In the letters of Paul, there's 262 questions.

In fact, I heard somebody say this. I can't document it, but a friend of ours, Jeremiah Johnson, said in the Bible alone there's just 3000 questions. So, whether that's even remotely close, the God who made our brains communicates with us through questions. So, we talk a ton about in the book about good, well placed questions. So, you can even ask the same question. And if it's in a defensive, aggressive posture, what happens? Defensive walls come up. But I found in most circumstances, if we just ask a question, not in a gotcha fashion.

Now, if it's in a debate, of course. I've seen you on stage. You want those gotcha moments. That's the rules. But that's not 99.9% of any of our communication. I ask myself this question, Frank. You know, communication, simply put, there's a sender, there's a message, and there's a receiver. Right? Sender, message, receiver.

And I have a message that this person, like you said, is borrowing from the Christian worldview to assume a standard of rights or to assume that God ought to answer prayers. But the question a lot of Christians don't ask is how do I get that message best received? Now, even people walked away from Jesus, of course, right? The rich young ruler walked away. So, there's no guarantee way to do this. But the Bible has a lot to say and modeling about communicating the way that it's received. And so, I think relationships help, questions help. If I communicate with charity in a way, hey, I'm really curious.

So, for example, you talk about being an atheist and how there's no objective moral standard. But on the other hand, you talk about people stealing their rights, you know, losing their rights. I don't understand how you keep those two in tension. Help me understand how you see the world, because from where I sit, that looks like a contradiction. That's a direct question. But it's really because I'm curious and I want them to think about it. Then we're off having a good dialogue.

**FRANK:**

If you want to end the stalemate with people you love or just people in general, get the new book 'End the Stalemate' with Dr. Sean McDowell and Dr. Tim Muelhoff. It will help you. And

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we'll also talk about more practical ways to do this in our final segment. Don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Ladies and gentlemen, how can you deal with people who do not agree with you in an effective way so you can advance the ball, so to speak, toward the Christian faith, even people who are hostile to the Christian faith?

My friend Dr. Sean McDowell has a new book that will help you do that. It's called 'End the Stalemate.' By the way, before I forget, this coming midweek podcast, which you will not hear on the American Family Radio network, ladies and gentlemen. You have to look for the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast. We're going to answer a question we got from a listener on Romans 9. Does Romans 9 mean that God is creating people to go to Hell? We're going to deal with that issue, but you're not going to hear it on the American Family Radio network.

You've got to find the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast and listen to it this coming Tuesday. And before I forget about podcasts, Sean, you've got a couple of great podcasts, but all your YouTube content is where? Where can people get it other than YouTube if they just want to listen?

**SEAN:**

Well, if they just search the Sean McDowell Show, it's on Apple, it's on Spotify. And I take all my YouTube content and put it there for audio. I also have a podcast called the 'Think Biblically Podcast' out of Biola that I co-host with Scott Rae, one of the leading Christian ethicists in America and beyond. And we do an episode on Tuesdays, and then we do a weekly cultural update every Friday, three big stories or four in the news, and answer questions people have. We look at them biblically.

**FRANK:**

All right, Sean, you have a chapter in 'End the Stalemate' book on dealing with explosive issues. And let me preface this by asking this question. I mean, this is sort of just, you know, a classic thing you hear never talk about, you know, politics and or religion, when in fact, those are two of the most important things to talk about. But let me ask you this. Why are people so spooled up about talking about these issues? Why does the tension immediately rise if you talk about politics or religion?

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**SEAN:**

Well, sometimes we ground our identities in our politics and in certain religious views. So, somebody critiques a view, and we take it personally. Now, of course, I'm a Christian, so somebody thinks Christianity is false. That means a lot, but I'm not going to get insulted by that. Part of being a Christian is, I expect many people not to believe in it. So, I think one reason is because we put so much of our stakes in politics. I think another reason is we just lost how to communicate well. We just lost how to listen.

We've lost how to ask good questions. We've lost how to just have relationships with people who see the world differently. I think of Kirsten Powers was an atheist, and she's a Christian, but far more left leaning than you and I would be on a lot of social issues. And she became a Christian when she went and heard Timothy Keller in the book, presenting the content behind the book, 'Reason for God.' And she wrote this whole book, it's a decade ago now, called 'The Silencing,' about how she views like the ultra-left silencing people before cancel culture.

In the end of the book, she said, my advice is to just go build relationships with people who see the world differently. Don't be threatened by them. Just go build relationships to them. And I thought that was worth the price of the entire book. She's right. And we don't build those relationships. We're threatened by different ideas. Our identity is rooted in some political view. We're emotionally hurt and broken as a culture today. And social media feeds into this division, and anger, and hostility. So, of course, we've lost the ability to communicate well with each other.

**FRANK:**

Yeah, I think social media also widens the divide because most people on social media just subscribe to what they want to hear. It's an echo chamber. And so, you're not really hearing the other side. You're only hearing your side, so to speak. And that can create even more division, especially with the demonization of the other side. And look, if you don't believe in the depravity of man, just look at a YouTube comment section or a Twitter feed. You will see some of the most vile, just ridiculously inconsiderate and insulting comments on these feeds. It just comes out.

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It's like Jesus said, it's not what goes into a man that makes him unclean. It's what comes out of a man. And you see so much of the depravity, people insulting one another, just mocking one another. And it's actually evidence for me that the Christian worldview is true, Sean, because Christianity is the only worldview that really gets human nature right.

Everybody says, oh, people are inherently good. No, we're not. We insult people. We're angry, we're divided. We're selfish. It's easy to be bad. It's hard to be good. But let's deal directly with the issue, though, Sean, about explosive issues. Give us some tips on how to address explosive issues from the chapter in the book 'End the Stalemate.'

**SEAN:**

So, this chapter came out of a blog I wrote maybe three or four years ago when critical race theory was everywhere in the cultural conversation. And I heard some people just saying we should embrace it. And that struck me as being off. And I heard some people just so quickly dismissing it that I thought, I'm not even sure you've actually read primary sources and understand what it is.

So, I started reading a lot of readers on it and books, trying to understand for myself. And I just said, you know what? If we're going to engage a topic like this, number one, let's read primary sources clearly. So, let's engage critical race theory with clarity. Step number one is to understand. Step number two, read it charitably.

So, I can read the Quran charitably to try to understand it on its own terms first. Or I can read it looking for errors and contradictions. And you might say, well, it's not true. But I wouldn't want a Muslim to read the Bible that way. I actually would want them to read it charitably. So read it with clarity, second, with charity, and then third, engage ideas like critical race theory critically. Let's make sure we understand it. Don't respond to a straw man.

See if there's anything we can learn from it, and then be critical. We flip that around and skip the clarity part, skip reading with charity and just lean into criticism before we've actually taken the time to understand it. I think that's, in part, a way of loving our neighbors. And I'll fully admit, Frank, there's times where I've responded to stuff and gone back and been like, you

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know what? I didn't do my due diligence here to understand this in the way that I should. I'm going to do better.

So, like, for example, somebody's newsfeed. If somebody pulls out their phone right now and all they listen to is people who politically and theologically agree with them, then they're probably not going to engage other ideas charitably and with clarity. You look at my podcast, and I have some on multiple sides of other issues.

And so, I think most people are willing to have conversations about explosive issues. Most people, not all. If we approach them in the right way at the right time and we try to calm things down rather than explode the issues, I think the vast majority of people are willing to engage on those topics. If we just treat them the way we'd want people to treat us.

**FRANK:**

I have to ask you, though, there is a line, and I want to ask your opinion as to where the line is about engaging people who claim to be Christians but deny that known sin is sin, particularly on the sexual issues. Because if you look at 1 Corinthians 5, Paul has a man sleeping with his father's wife, and he says, expel the immoral brother from the church. Do not even eat with such a person.

Maybe this person will come to his senses and a little yeast leavens the entire loaf. In other words, he wanted to protect the congregation and he wanted to bring this guy to his senses. And if you read 2 Corinthians, it appears anyway, if you read between the lines that this guy did repent and come back. So, is there a line, Sean, where we can't have any more dialogue with someone who claims to be a Christian but is, say, totally affirming with LGBTQ?

**SEAN:**

Well, keep in mind, Paul is writing to a church, and he's giving pastoral advice. So, there's a question. Does the church in that day exactly mirror the kind of church in our day? That's a fair question to ask. And then we can ask a question. Do requirements for a particular church translate beyond the church into the public arena? And I don't think they necessarily do. I'm a professor. I'm not trying to run a church.

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Now, would I have a lot of the same conversations I have on YouTube inside a local church when I'm responsible for a flock? Probably not. Or at least I might frame them a little bit differently. But I talk about in the book a conversation with Brandon Robertson, and he is an outspoken LGBTQ advocate. And he said things like, he calls himself a Christian, progressive Christian, but believes that Jesus sinned. I mean, my estimation that clearly undermines the historic Christian faith by any kind of consideration.

And so, I had him on and took some criticism from people. They're like, why are you platforming him? I said, well, first off, he already has a platform. Second, I am very clearly laying out the differences between what he considers progressive Christianity and what I will consider a historic, you know, Christian faith. And there is value in charitably having a conversation. And it's not just I scratch your back, you scratch mine. Let's get along and sing Kumbaya. Push back, appropriately. Clarify differences.

And anybody who watched that conversation, well, I don't want to overstate it with brains. That might not be charitably. But anybody who just understands what's going on goes, oh, wow, Sean's doing a service here by showing exactly that progressive Christianity is affirming on LGBTQ, believes that Jesus sinned, has a different view of biblical authority. That in itself brings a level of clarity and value that's different from the kind of advice Paul is giving to a local church in the first century.

**FRANK:**

There's so much more in the book, ladies and gentlemen. You can get it on Amazon, anywhere you get books. Again, the book is called 'End the Stalemate: Move Past Cancel Culture to Meaningful Conversations.' And that's going to be especially true in a polarizing election year as well, friends. You want to be able to communicate with people, loved ones who may have different political views than you, and you want to be able to do it in a charitable but a constructive way. Sean, where else can people learn more about your work? Where can they go?

**SEAN:**

Probably SeanMcdowell.org has a link to everything else. But quickly, I want to say is not everybody can debate like you, Frank. Not everybody's going to write a book or host a podcast.

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Every Christian can have a conversation with a co-worker, with a family member, with a neighbor, be a peacemaker, advance the Christian worldview through listening and asking good questions. We can all get in the game relationally. That's what 'End the Stalemate' is trying to do.

**FRANK:**

Thanks so much, Sean. Ladies and gentlemen, get the book 'End the Stalemate' so you can be better, a better ambassador for Jesus, so you can approach these hard conversations in the appropriate manner to move the ball forward. And, ladies and gentlemen, Lord willing, I'll see you here next week. And don't forget the Tuesday midweek podcast. We'll be talking about predestination and free will in Romans 9. Don't miss it. You're predestined to be there, freely.

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