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What We Found in Churches and Campus Ministries

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Knight & Rose Show - Wintery Knight and Desert Rose

What does church look like for someone who wasn't raised in the church? Neither Wintery Knight nor Desert Rose were raised in Christian homes. In this episode, we explain what we found in campus ministries and churches in America. We look at how well churches are doing at producing Christians who accept the core beliefs of the Christian worldview. We take a look at the church's approaches to evangelism and discipleship. We also look at the history of evangelical Protestantism in America. Please subscribe, like, comment, and share. Show notes:

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Transcript

Welcome to the Knight & Rose Show where we provide practical advice for living an authentic, effective Christian life. I'm Wintery Knight. And I'm Desert Rose.

Today we'd like to talk about the state of the evangelical American church. Rose, why don't you start us off? What is the state of the evangelical church in America today? Is the church doing a good job of producing people who maintain a Christian worldview

after leaving home? Actually, that's a great question. This is a big, big problem for the church today.

Young people in America are leaving Christianity like never before in America. According to the American worldview inventory released this past fall of 2021, 43% of millennials don't know, don't care, or don't believe that God exists. This is in comparison to 28% of baby boomers who think similarly.

Millennials are adults who were born from 1982 to 2000. So we're talking about adults here who are 22 to 40 years old. I hear people saying, "Oh, millennials are just young.

They will come back to the faith after their high school years or after their college years or after they've gone wild for a little bit of time." I've heard that too. Yeah. And so the fact is we're talking about people who are in their 20s, 30s, and even now 40s.

We're talking about grown adults, often with spouses and children, and they still do not care, do not know, or do not believe that God exists. There is really no more time for this baseless optimism. What we are doing is not effective in convincing young people of the truth of Christianity.

Other people are making cases for their positions. Muslims are making a case for Islam. Atheists are making a case.

Feminists are making a case. Socialists are making a case. But we have this idea in the church somehow that we can just love people into the kingdom.

And if we just love people, they'll just know that everything they were taught was wrong about atheism and Darwinism and such things. And they'll just conclude that, "Oh, God must be real and Jesus must be Lord and I should surrender my life to Him." That is not what is happening. We've been trying these same approaches for generations now.

And what we have is an ever-increasing percentage of young people who just do not care or do not believe. It is not working. Yeah, I'm seeing this all the time.

So I work in information technology. I've been a software engineer for 22 years. And you would not believe there's just so many people in that industry that come out of a Christian background.

They talk to me about going to Christian camps and going to Christian private schools, going to youth group and meeting their Christian wife in a youth group, and then both of them become atheists. Some people talk about becoming atheists as soon as they hit the university. They just lose their faith immediately.

Whenever I ask them, "Have you ever worked through the questions of God's existence?" They tell me that they never even heard of apologetics or any of the arguments. And it's

pretty obvious to me that most Christian parents didn't exchange their kids—sorry, didn't engage their kids with apologetics when they were teaching them. Maybe they should have exchanged their kids.

Yeah, I mean, if they had exchanged their kids with kids from China and Africa, they'd probably be a lot more conservative in their beliefs. Anyway, so I think what I've heard from one girl I mentored was that her mom was really focused on getting her in the right clothes and exhibiting the right outward behaviors, just giving the right answers. And whenever she would ask questions of her mother, the mother would get really angry and dismiss her and say that she was a bad person because she didn't have enough faith.

The focus of Christian parents a lot of the time is kind of on preserving family unity. You don't want to betray the family by falling away, do you? And they're very concerned about fitting in with the church community and putting up this good appearance rather than working through their children's questions. And I just think that works until they hit university and then they're gone.

Right, absolutely. So I also wanted to ask you another question. I wanted to know what's your impression, like you've been in a lot of different jobs in the church and have been in many churches.

Do you think the church is doing a good job at producing people who accept the core beliefs of the Christian worldview? No, I don't think so at all. This is actually another huge problem for the church. The church is not producing Christians largely who have a biblical worldview.

Again, looking at more recent research we see from the American worldview inventory published by the Cultural Research Center of Arizona Christian University that of the 176 million self-identifying Christians, only about 6% hold beliefs that even superficially resemble Christianity, biblical Christianity. The large majority do not believe the central basics of the Christian faith. They don't believe in the Holy Spirit.

They believe things like all religions lead to heaven and people are inherently good and you can earn your salvation by works and things like this. And they believe that there is no such thing as moral absolutes. This was somewhere around 62% do not believe in moral absolutes.

This is of self-proclaimed Christians, people who believe they are Christians do not believe they're such a thing as moral absolutes. How do you even talk about right and wrong if there's no objective moral standards? You're just talking about your own preferences. Right, exactly, exactly.

People who claim to be Christians, who believe they are Christians, believe that having some faith matters more than which faith you have. There's no room for that in

Christianity. There's nothing like that in the life of Jesus, the teachings of Jesus, anywhere throughout the Bible.

Another really interesting, really sad statistic that I saw was the number who, the percentage who consider their feelings, their experiences, or the input of their friends and family as the most trusted resources for moral guidance in their lives. So not the Bible, not truth, not the Lord, but their feelings, their friends. And I see this all the time.

I have seen friends go from one end of the spectrum on a belief all the way to the other end of the spectrum depending on what the culture around them says. And so we are talking about people who are not operating on solid ground. And then those are just people who claim to be Christians.

Even more astonishing to me is that of the 6% who believe that the Bible is reliable and accurate, only 25% say there's no moral absolute truth. Again, how is this even possible? How is that resembling Christianity at all? 42% believe that having faith matters more than which faith you pursue. So 42% of the 6% who believe the Bible is reliable and accurate, believe that having any sort of faith matters more than which faith they pursue.

And then 52% argue that people are basically good. 52%. Okay, so to me, this means immediately they do not have a Christian worldview.

So right here we see that really only about 3% at most of people who think they're Christians have a Christian worldview. I mean, you only have to get to Genesis chapter 3 to realize that people are inherently sinful ever since the fall. Okay, so some of these are theological, some are more practical outworkings, but even the theological ideas like that people are basically good.

These have serious implications for worldview. If, for example, people are inherently good and selfless and try to do the right thing in every situation, then socialism actually might be a pretty good idea. Right.

So there are very serious worldview questions here and Christians are not getting their beliefs from the Bible. Yeah, it sounds like people are more interested in conforming to the stated beliefs of like a group, you know, like their family or community, but nobody is really doing any investigatory work to decide what's actually true out there. So one of the issues that you raise was religious pluralism, like, you know, people are looking at other religions and they're uncomfortable with the idea that there's something wrong with them.

And I think that's a problem. Like I should mention, my mom's side of the family is entirely Muslim and my dad's side of the family, my dad's side of the family is almost entirely Hindu. And so I grew up in, you know, a multiracial and multireligious household.

And what I found, and they wanted me to be like them. So what I found in forming my own Protestant faith convictions is that if you kind of don't worry about minor issues, but more but focus more on the major issues like say, does God exist? And how do we know that and talk about the scientific evidence that grounds that claim like the origin of the universe, the cosmic fine tuning, the origin of life. I found it's much easier to disagree with people on minor issues like your religion is wrong and making them feel bad because of that.

Once they see that you've done the work to form your views by studying facts, but they're more okay with that. So, for example, like on the Hindu side of our family, if I talk to them about the origin of the universe, that's not compatible with their cosmology. Hindus believe in an eternally oscillating universe.

So when I explain to them the scientific facts, they don't sense that I'm excluding them because they're different. They sense that I disagree with them on a matter that is testable. And that doesn't offend them as much as saying, I don't like you.

I don't want to be part of the family. I want to hurt your feelings. I mean, they did try to convert me like they, you know, but to conform to the religious beliefs of the family.

But I think that converting me is like Pokemon. You have to beat me in order to make me join you, right? I'm not going to, I'm not going to, I'm not going to join you until you defeat me. And so they were never able to do that, but they weren't too bothered by my convictions because they knew why I believed them.

Right. And as far as I can see, there's really just no place for this in most evangelical churches. So I can understand that your family would come to the conclusion that you are not rejecting them.

You're rejecting beliefs. You're rejecting certain objective facts that do not hold up to the evidence. When I show them my work and say, this is how I arrived at this belief.

These are the discoveries that led me to this. They have an opportunity to challenge those discoveries. Right.

And if they don't want to do that, then, you know, they understand why I don't agree with them. And there's no reason to be unhappy. So let me ask you a different question.

So I think everybody, every Christian who is still in the faith has, can tell a story about being mentored, you know, by a more mature Christian as part of their development. Do you think that the church is doing a good job of encouraging more mature Christians to mentor younger Christians? This is an important point because discipleship was obviously a huge focus of Jesus's. When he walked the earth, he chose 12 men to spend life, to do life with day in and day out, to eat with and drink with and go to weddings with and minister to people with.

They were with him pretty much all the time. And everything was a teachable moment. He would preach in front of them.

He would send them out then to do likewise. And this is not happening in the church today. I very rarely have seen it in the churches that I've been a part of.

And according to a recent Barnapole from January 26 of this year, 2022, just 28% of Christians are both being discipled and discipling others, or to use your word, mentoring and being mentored. Another 28% are being discipled, but they're not helping others grow closer to Christ. They're not mentoring others.

And only 5% are discipling others, but not being discipled. So there is a huge gap in discipleship, a huge lack of mentoring. Basically, it seems that Christians are content with, or at least what's being offered to them, is one hour of singing and hearing a speech on Sundays.

Maybe a midweek Bible study, oftentimes led by people who themselves are not discipled. And that's kind of the extent of it. So if discipleship isn't happening though, then what on earth are we doing? Like I said, this was Jesus' huge focus.

He didn't just say, "I'm going to speak to, I'm going to embrace these 12 guys for the week, or for a one evening speech, and then send them out." And get a new group of 12 guys, or anything like that. He invested deeply into 12 people. Of course, there were many others who were following him at various times, who were observing him, who were talking to him, things like that.

But there were 12 who he was particularly invested in, doing life with them 24/7. And we're not seeing anything remotely close to this. For me personally, discipleship is the primary means by which I have grown in my faith.

Both by spending hours upon hours upon hours in books and videos and such by mature Christians, and also by spending hours upon hours with women, older and more mature Christian women, pouring into me, talking to me about every aspect of life, modeling for me how they handle very difficult situations, and sharing openly about every aspect of life. Talking about everything from politics to sex to how to handle a difficult moral situation when kind of the right thing is illegal for example, and how do we handle that and why. All of those things are critical and they just don't seem to be happening.

Right. And wasn't there the story you told me about this girl? She wanted you to mentor her and you gave her some advice and what happened with that? Yeah, that's happened a few times. Tell me, let me know if this isn't the situation that you're thinking of.

I know I've told you before about one young woman in particular who asked me to mentor her and I gave her a few chapters of a book to read and set a time that we would get together and talk about that and we would kind of go from there, but that was just

the very first step and she canceled several times because fun things came up, life came up, sometimes they were good reasons, sometimes they were bad reasons. Right. And when we did get together, she had not read anything.

So I asked her again, well, let's talk about your week, let's talk about some of the situations you've faced at work this week because she was working a full-time job. She was pregnant with her first child and so one of the things I was talking to her about was the importance of her as the child's mother giving up this \$7, \$7.50 an hour job doing something pretty meaningless in order to stay home and raise her children and how critical that was, how important that is, what a significant and incredible role that is for the mother to be home. And she basically dismissed that because she just wasn't feeling it because her friends look more highly upon people who have a business card and an income.

And I talked to her about why abortion is wrong as a matter of science and fact as well as the Bible and all the more so when you put what we know from science together with what we are told from the Bible. And the bottom line is she didn't read anything. I asked her to read over the course of about several months and she continued to argue with me from her feelings about abortion and things like that.

And ultimately she told me, "Look, I appreciate you taking the time and making the effort to invest in me and giving me things to read, but I just really don't grow from listening to other people or reading or hearing arguments or anything like that. Really, I just have to experience everything by myself for myself before I can know that it's wrong." So she said, "I have decided abortion is probably usually wrong because I'm pregnant now and I know that this is a baby, a living human inside of me." And so I'll give you that, but until I experience being a homosexual, I can't really take a position on that. Really, I just don't want to hear arguments and I don't want to read anything and I really just don't want to do work.

But I really want to be like you. I want to know what I believe and why I believe it. I just don't want to have to do any work to get there.

Yeah, and when I look at the culture, it seems like a lot of the people who are making the decisions about the world that Christians are living in are people who come out of the universities. And I see the universities like Dennis Prager says as kind of leftist seminaries. They just keep churning out these people, but they're equipped to be influential by getting these degrees, these credentials.

And then they turn around and sort of make the rules for the rest of us. I wonder, I've never seen the church get serious either about the discipleship that you're talking about or about like giving people a vision for what they should be doing, what they should be choosing as a major, how hard they should be working at university, what kind of jobs they should get so that we can have the people who are going to be influential in the

next generation. Let me go on to another question.

Do you see any evidence that the church has plans to reverse some of the trends about low levels of orthodoxy about core Christian beliefs? What do you think that pastors, church leaders, youth leaders, and other Christian influencers are focusing on to help people to have stronger, more conservative Christian worldviews? Great question. I have done a lot of research on this. I've talked to a lot of pastors about this.

I have a lot of friends who are pastors, and I'm really not seeing very much when it comes to the church. I see people outside of the church, people who are disconnected from the church who have some ideas, but from within the evangelical church, what I continue to read and hear and see is the same failed plan of the last church. The same failed plan of the last few generations that's unbiblical and ineffective.

These are things like fun experiences, going to the lake, having pizza parties for the youth group, having fun services and fun potlucks and fun bouncy balloon parties for holidays and things like this. Relationships and of course relationships don't feel good if anybody gets challenged or if anybody has to do work or is told that their beliefs don't line up with Scripture or something like that. The plan is to these continued watered down sermons that don't offend anybody.

We don't want to upset anyone. We don't want to hurt their feelings. We just want everyone to get along.

We want to be nice to everyone. If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all, which is ridiculously unbiblical, by the way. As you know, this replacement of hymns with sentimental pop music so that people kind of feel like they're at this emotional concert that makes them feel good.

Tell us what you really think, Rose. This is ridiculous. I don't understand how anyone can be expected to grow in this type of environment.

And then we have this outreach policy or principle, if you want to call it, to just love them into the kingdom. I hear this all over the place. Just love them.

Don't cause any disagreement or argument or challenge anyone. You just want to love them. And then they'll just figure out everything if you just love them.

When I raise concerns about how this hasn't been working, how it isn't working for the youngest generation and the second youngest generation, and basically any generation that's still alive today, I continue to hear this whole thing about, "Well, don't worry. Once they've sowed their youthful oats, they'll come back. They'll be back soon.

They just need to be young and free." Well, I mean, when we're seeing that baby boomers have left the church in pretty significant percentages, and then Generation X

more than they have, and then Millennials even more than they have, pretty sure that we can declare that a failed strategy. I actually read from a youth pastor recently this quote. He was asked when confronted with the idea that or with the statistics that Millennials, 43% of Millennials, just don't care or don't believe in God.

His response was, "Well, I'm optimistic because light shines brightest in the darkness, and we have lots of darkness now. So, yay." I mean, that's just, the idiocy is just really frustrating. I mean, if darkness is what we want, then why not just adopt Islam, and then we can have all kinds of darkness to shine in.

Move to North Korea if it's so great. That's right. So much darkness.

Yay. So, yeah, we have a serious problem going on here. And then others who I think are possibly even more toxic or dangerous to Christians and Christianity, evangelicalism are leaders who have decided to focus their energy and utilize their platform for things like bashing conservatives, condemning the marginalized Christians who are fighting for religious freedom, spending all their time focused on bashing Donald Trump, who isn't even in office anymore, who cares.

Instead of supporting those who are fighting for religious freedom, who are fighting for a chance at life for the unborn, who are fighting for lower taxes so that Christians have money to support the spread of the gospel and discipleship rather than funding LGBTQ causes. This reminds me of an article. You have to let me talk about this article.

So, I saw an article, like, I think it was about a few days ago in The Daily Wire. I'm a big Daily Wire fan. This was written by Megan Bicham.

She wrote an article. It was an amazing article, a link in the show notes. But it was basically talking about how a lot of prominent evangelical leaders were working with the Biden administration to promote the Biden administration's healthcare policies.

So, for example, Ed Stetzer, who's at Wheaton College, did a podcast where he announced a partnership between the Billy Graham Center and the Biden administration to promote their healthcare policies. Christianity Today, she wrote, had articles promoting the healthcare policies of the Biden administration. Joe Carter at the Gospel Coalition, I can't remember whether this was a podcast or an article, but he was ridiculing people who dissented from the official narratives of the Biden administration.

The former SBC leader, Russell Moore, he used to be at the ERLC. I think he's a Christianity Today Now. He did a webinar when he was with the ERLC promoting the Biden administration healthcare policies.

And Tim Keller did an interview with the former NIH director, Francis Collins, where they were denigrating churches that were still meeting in person. You know, we're asking, do they have a plan to fix people leaving the church? Well, they've got a plan, but the plan

isn't to help people build stronger worldviews. The plan is to promote the politics of the current administration.

This even extends. I have some experiences I want to talk about. So I used to go to an SBC church and the pastor once said in a Bible study we were in that Jesus was a refugee.

And I have to stand up and correct him on this in front of like 60 people. But this is, you know, this is a popular thing. They're very concerned about, you know, appearing nice more than they're concerned about answering questions about worldview.

Like, how do we know God exists? How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? So you end up having to prepare to counter these kinds of slogans that they're throwing out there in their rush to take on these new priorities that make them appear virtuous. Another time in that SBC church, we had a speaker from the ERLC come in and he was arguing for open borders and reduced border security. And I'm a legal immigrant.

So I went up there and waved my green card in his face and said, do you know there's a way to get this? You just have to have the right education and the right work experience. We have a way of allowing, you know, legal immigrants to come in. I don't want to say too much about that.

I'll put something in the show notes about how to respond to that. Jesus was a refugee argument, but let's go on to something else. Yeah, I see that and hear that all the time.

So yeah, that's absolutely something that I think we should be ready to reply to because so many people think Jesus was a refugee and that thereby, therefore by helping refugees just flood into the US, we're doing some great thing. We're helping, you know, Jesus basically. Right.

Like we didn't have bigger problems like the definition of marriage and the status of the unborn to deal with or religious liberty. Let me ask you a different question. In the past, I think America inherited this amazing tradition from the first, you know, the Puritans who landed in America.

They seem to take their Christian faith very seriously. And I think something happened between then and today that really changed our views about the core beliefs of the Christian worldview. I know you've looked into this.

So tell us what you found. Yeah, I'll tell you what happened between the Puritans and now it started with the first and then the second great awakenings. These were around the time of the American Revolution.

The first great awakening was just before the second great awakening was after. And the things that they focused on, I think you'll recognize as being prominent in evangelical

churches today. And that's where a lot of this started.

So in the first and second great awakenings, preachers would go from town to town and they would preach this very soul stirring, emotional message for a night or maybe two or three evenings possibly in the same area. And then they would go on to the next town. So there is not enough room here.

No discipling. Not enough time exactly for discipleship, for any sort of depth. They're trying to get people, they were trying to get people to focus on an intense emotional conversion experience.

Does that sound familiar? Yes. Have an intense emotional experience. There was no time for focusing on learning.

There was nothing about counting the cost. It was just actors, seriously, literally. George Whitefield's background was as an actor.

So this actor would get up on stage and he would stomp his feet and he would weep and act out this emotional play, this drama, and try to get people to have this emotional experience in reaction and in response. I mean, so the focus was on feelings. It was on emotion.

There was very little depth to it. Religion was redefined in terms of emotion and feelings as opposed to truth and evidence, which had been more of a focus before. Before the Great Awakenings and most of the pastors had extensive theological training.

They had extensive worldview training. They had all kinds of credentials as scholars. They were the kind of people you could learn from in depth throughout your adulthood.

They were people who knew their theology, who worshipped God with the mind, and these people are actually made fun of. They were mocked by the preachers of the Great Awakening. And so the preachers of the Great Awakening would give this drama, this play, with their weeping and stomping their feet and yelling and getting people to respond.

And they would make fun of the theological education of the intellectuals back east. They would say they'd make fun of all those intellectuals back east. It was very anti-intellectual, especially in the Second Great Awakening.

It was increasingly anti-intellectual from the first to the second Great Awakening. They abandoned the creeds and confession and all the great works of the saints of the past that people had spent their lives thinking through and arguing through and working out through study of the Bible as well as study of philosophy. Philosophy of religion, I'm thinking, is pretty useful for apologetics.

Yeah. And so, again, no discipleship, no study. They would just move on to the next town.

And few people who had experienced this emotional stirring at one event would then be recruited to go to other towns to act out these same dramas, the same, give the same type of performance in other towns and encourage people to pray a prayer, to get saved. You get saved on the spot at the moment without any sort of catechism or understanding of any depth. You hear this message and there you go.

That's all you need. Now you're ready to be a preacher and to go on and save others. Wow.

So we're talking about pastors really being celebrities, not scholars. And there was this huge, huge focus up to two years in advance of the time when George Whitefield or others would arrive at a town. There was this huge focus on publicity, on marketing, mass marketing, according to the methods of the day.

There were press releases. There was all kind of self-promotion. These were staged events.

And in fact, they would actually inflate their numbers in order to sound more impressive and attract more people so that they were given the impression, this is where everybody's going to be. This is where everybody was in Phoenix and this is where everybody needs to be in Denver next week or next year or two years from now. If you're not there, you're square, whatever.

So also, the audience was made up of strangers, right? So they had no knowledge of the preacher's character, of his education, anything like that. All the preacher was evaluated on and was his ability to bring up in people an emotional response. There was a huge focus on individualism, detached from a local congregation.

These preachers wouldn't even encourage people to leave their local church in order to find "truly converted, emotion-focused preachers." Because these scholars were too boring to be truly converted. You need someone who is really emotional and feelings-based to be... When would you apply the standard like this to any other area of life? Like, if you were hiring someone to do work for you, when would it impress... Why would you choose them for their ability to stir emotions and you were to put on a show on a stage? You would always expect them to explain to you, if it was a doctor or an auto mechanic, you would expect them to run diagnostics and show you reports and then recommend treatments or recommend fixing this or fixing that. This is not how we do life in any other area.

The only area I can think of is Hollywood. People think that... I've heard people say, "Well, the church seems to be taking its cue from Hollywood." Actually, it's the reverse.

The Great Awakenings were well before the days of Hollywood.

This is a thing that comes out of the church and it's quite embarrassing and it has had a huge impact on the way church is done within evangelicalism today. I experienced this myself when I was a student in IVCF and Campus Crusade. There just seemed to be this focus on non-intellectual activities like people providing their testimonies, having lots of prayer walks, lots of hymn sings.

I remember one year when I was doing my graduate degree, Campus Crusade put on this event called "I'm With Percy" where they had one person share their testimony. This was in my second year. In the first year, I had offered to train them in apologetics and they had turned it down.

They said, "We don't want to see any DVDs. We don't want to listen to any lectures. We're not watching any debates.

We have no interest in learning how to defend our faith." Then in the second year, I was more focused on my thesis. Then they set up this website where they put up this Percy Guy's testimony and they said, "Wintry, you have to go." This is just one of the people in Campus Crusade. It was just some student that they had picked who had an interesting testimony.

Not cognitive, not intellectual, but just sharing his emotional experiences. They came back to me and they said, "Wintry, you have to come and help us. We set up this website for discussions and everyone's asking a lot of questions like the kind that you wanted us to learn how to answer." I was like, "Look, I'm really busy with my thesis right now.

That's why last year you should have let me show you these lectures and debates so I could have trained you. I don't have time for you to do this." This is the kind of thing you see in the church and in youth groups and in campus groups a lot is they don't want to get trained. They get surprised by these questions, but there is no way for a person to become, "Okay, well, I exaggerate." In my opinion, to become a Christian means to go through that three-step process R.C. Sproul talks about, getting the notitia, the data, and then the essence, the intellectual essence, and then the fiducia, which is the active trusting.

But there's got to be a step in there where you evaluate those truth claims and there's just no way to finesse your way into a Christian worldview. You're not going to know whether these things are true and it's just going to fall away the minute it gets a slight bit challenging and someone disapproves. Yeah, and you mentioned the experience where the campus group came back to you and said, "Hey, now we have people asking these questions.

Now we need you." And I don't know if they wanted you to come and train them at that

point. No, they wanted me to just make the problem go away. They wanted me to come in and answer the questions.

So nobody wants to learn. They don't want to do anything if it requires any work. And the problem is, like any other expert in any other field, this just doesn't fly.

I can't have someone come in and start writing code without them having a great deal of experience understanding algorithms and databases and security protocols and so on. There's got to be training that goes on and practicing before we can throw the real thing at you. And we just don't do that, in my opinion.

In the church, it was the same thing. I would come in and I would bring in a bunch of William Lane Craig debates on DVD or I would bring the focus on the family videos featuring Stephen Meyer. And they would take them.

I don't think they ever watched them, but then they would just go in a different direction. I think they just don't think that Christianity is a knowledge tradition. And so they find these things useless.

Our job is to get a lot of people into the church, a lot of people with the right ethnicity mix, you know, some from this one and some from that one. A lot of women and men, you know, the right, you know, just diversity of a large number of people. But no focus on what happens when people say, why do you believe Jesus rose from the dead? Why do you believe that God exists? They just don't want to do the work.

Anyway, last question. Exactly. Last question.

Let me ask you this. So I have seen I was reading this book review on the Gospel Coalition's website where this pastor was reviewing J. Warner Wallace's book *Cold Case Christianity*. And I'll put the link in the show notes.

And he was basically saying, like, I don't like the idea that we cannot accept the truth claims of the Bible unless we have archaeological evidence or unless we have extra biblical evidence. Why do we have to go outside the Bible and look at archaeology and non-Christian writers who were corroborating what the Bible said? Right. Surely everybody believes the Bible is completely reliable and trustworthy and all that it says and does already.

Right. Yeah. Why would we need to go outside of it? That's just silly.

Sorry. Go ahead. You know, I mean, to tell me, what is this view called? And, you know, what do you make of it? What? Where is this? Where is this view coming from where your faith is better the less evidence you have? Right.

Yeah. Well, the view is actually called "fideism." It's an exclusive reliance on faith,

rejecting appeals to science or philosophy, archaeology, like you mentioned. It's a view that faith takes precedence over reason, such that even evidence, reason and logic are dismissed.

So if you if you hear people say you just have to have faith, just have faith or like in this article that you're referring to people getting upset because Christians are using evidence external to the Bible to demonstrate that Christianity is true. It just blows my mind that anyone would have a problem with that. But this view, this view that we should just rely on the Bible only, just have faith, even if you have no reasons to believe that the Bible is reliable, which we do have lots and lots of reasons to believe the Bible is reliable.

But people don't want us to bring that up. And so I really believe that this view is very self-serving because again, like we were talking about before, people don't want to do the work. It's much easier to just repeat this sanctimonious piousness.

Oh, you just need to have faith and just believe the Bible and repeat Bible verses to people. And if you need anything more than that, then there's something wrong with you. You don't have enough faith.

You know, it allows people to be lazy and put themselves up as superior at the same time. But without having to do the work. Without having to do the work, exactly.

But it harms the mission. It may help people feel better about themselves temporarily, but it harms the overall mission without a doubt because then Christians get this reputation for being anti-intellectual, for being anti-science. They're making the rest of us look bad by identifying the Christian worldview, which is fantastically robust with this kind of easy blind faith.

So I've actually encountered this in the church as well. We had a speaker who came out and I asked him, how do you deal? I went up to him afterwards after he had presented this view and I said, it seems to me like what you're saying is that you want people to be very non-cognitive and focused on feelings. So how do you deal with a non-Christian? Like, would you just sing to them? And he said, yes, I would.

He said, yes, I would. I feel that singing to a non-Christian would be a very good approach. Seriously? Yes, yes.

I'm not making this up. This actually happened. And this guy was speaking in our church.

And so what I found is a lot of Christians have this view where they feel like they can get you to accept Christianity by just street preachers. They throw the words of the Bible at you. And sometimes they do it nicely.

Sometimes they say, here's some scripture. Why don't you just pray about it and see if

God convicts you that this scripture is true. So, you know, that's a neat way of kind of having to avoid arguing for it.

Yeah, everything that you're saying right now is actually reminding me of the Mormons who have been coming to my house recently and the Mormons who came to my house years ago when I lived in a different place. I got my address, got blacklisted then, but I've moved since then. So now new Mormons are coming to my house.

What did you do to the Mormons? Well, I asked them what evidence they have to support their view. And they said that it's a feeling, it's a burning in the bosom. And I need to just read the magic words on the page and feel the burning in my bosom.

And then I would know that it's true. And so I pointed out some evidence that indicates that Mormonism is not true. And so they ended up coming back to my house probably half dozen to maybe a dozen times at the most.

I think it was probably closer to six or eight times. And they kept bringing increasingly higher up people in their bureaucracy. On the last day, they told me that they had realized that I was hopeless because I needed evidence and I cared about facts instead of listening to my heart.

And so they actually stood up. There were about six guys there by that time because every time they brought back somebody higher up. And so there were six men and they stood up and they sang me a song.

Literally, I'm not even joking. They sang me a song and said, you know, may God touch your heart through that. And then they left.

And it's so funny that you're talking about this perspective within Christianity because I associate all of that. It sounds like we've been reduced to these practices of pizza parties and relational evangelism and relationships. And nobody has the perspective of, you know, an investment banker or a lawyer or an auto mechanic or a medical doctor and says, sit down, I'm going to give you your options.

Here's the data I have. And you have to make the decision based on this evidence that that's how we live every area of our life that matters. We always want to see the data and evaluate it.

And also, even in the Bible, nobody is using this approach. Paul is reasoning from the scriptures and the synagogues and Acts. Peter makes the appeal to the historicity of the resurrection in Acts, chapter two.

Jesus says, oh, your sins are forgiven to people. And then they go, how do we know that's true? And he says, I'm going to heal this paralytic so that you know that I have the authority to forgive sins. You know, he's always using evidence in order to prove his

claims about who he is and so on.

It's just such how did this emerge from the Bible? How did this anti-evidence, anti-reason view of Christian worldview and Christian life emerge from the Bible? I don't think it did. Exactly. That's the answer.

It didn't. And reading the Bible is a little bit of work, you know, like we've been talking about. It takes a little bit of work, a little bit of effort, some time.

At times, it can be hard to understand because it was from a different culture and time. And so, you know, commentaries help fill in the gaps that we don't understand because our culture is so different. So, you know, that's a little bit of additional work.

And in my experience, you know, even when I offered to train people in apologetics or hermeneutics or theology or any of these subjects, people don't generally want to be trained. What they generally want is me to talk to their atheist friend for that. They want me to answer the questions for them.

They want to know if they can give their friend or their family member my number so that I can do the work for them. But they don't want to be engaged. They don't want to be a part of it.

They don't want anyone to dislike them. And they certainly don't want to do the work. This is not the way.

Okay. So on the next episode, we're going to we should probably talk about that. We should try to find out how to fix this.

And I hope you have some ideas. I do have some ideas. Excellent.

Okay. All right. Let's call it there.

That's all we have for this episode. If you like the content of the show, please like comment and share. As always, you can find the references for this episode on [wintery night dot com](http://winterynight.com).

That's [W I N T E R Y K N I G H T dot com](http://WINTERYKNIGHT.com). We appreciate you taking the time to listen and we'll see you again in the next one. Thank you.

Thank you.

(dramatic music)