

Loving God With All Our Hearts and All Our Minds

On Tuesday, I had the distinct joy and privilege of recording four TV shows for a new series I'm hosting called *That's Debatable with Dr. Brown*. It will air on the new AWKNG TV network, hopefully starting sometime next month.

The debates we recorded covered four different subjects:

- Has the church replaced Israel?
- Are there valid reasons to leave Christianity?
- Does the God of the Bible exist?
- The Quran or the Bible: Which is the Word of God?

The guests included an Anglican vicar, a former charismatic Christian turned agnostic, a former evangelical turned atheist and a Muslim apologist.

Wednesday, I'm scheduled to do four more debates, one with a gay pastor on Jesus and LGBTQ+ people, one with a transgender pastor on affirming trans identities, one with a progressive Christian on abortion and one with a questioning Christian on divine healing.

This means that, aside from one or two of the shows, none of the other guests share my views about Scripture.

For some of them, the Bible is a downright dangerous book. For others, it is a holy book but hardly the Word of God. For others, it is a mixture, with its value determined by human interpretation alone.

The bottom line is that people have questions. Questions about the problem of suffering and evil. Questions about the

goodness of God. Questions about faith and unanswered prayers. Questions about the integrity of Scripture. Questions about human existence and purpose. Lots and lots of questions.

And that means that we need to have answers. Solid answers. Answers that will withstand scrutiny and rigorous thought. Answers that are anything but cheap.

Be assured that Almighty God is not put off by our questions!

Within days of my coming to faith in Jesus in 1971 as a heavy drug-using, rebellious Jewish rock drummer, my dad asked me to meet the local rabbi. (I should also mention that my father was the senior lawyer in the New York Supreme Court, so he had his own set of questions for me and was the opposite of an intellectual slouch.)

The rabbi, in turn, brought me to meet other rabbis, some of them very devout, all of them very sharp, and every one of them with serious challenges to my faith.

Then, during all my years in college and grad school, not one of my professors shared my faith. And while some were quite friendly and even supportive of my studies, others were openly hostile.

On top of this, through my first 15 years as a believer, I knew very few Christian (or Messianic Jewish) intellectuals, other than by reading their books. I had no contact with them directly and no ability to pick up the phone and call them. I had no access to their lectures and no way to pick their brains. (Now that I think of it, most of them were long dead, so their books were not exactly “contemporary.”)

The good news is that the more I studied and dug and searched and probed, despite some really difficult moments along the way, the more I found confirmation for my faith. It was not a matter of turning off my mind in order to believe. Instead, it was a matter of renewing my mind to the truth, of recognizing

that my experience in God—which was ongoing and not one-time—was based on the reality of God.

Unfortunately, millions of young people today have not experienced God for themselves (I'm also talking about children raised in church), which means that the questions about God are all the more challenging to them. Why should they believe? What's so important about the Bible? What makes Jesus so special? What about other religions? And why believe in such a mean religion, especially when it comes to its treatment of those who identify as LGBTQ?

All this makes for a toxic mix of unbelief, but one which is also perfectly understandable given the many secular influences on young people today, coupled with their lack of deep, spiritual experiences. To browbeat them for their lack of faith is to do the devil's work.

Instead, we need to provide an environment where people of all ages can ask their questions, a place where they can feel secure in their searching, a place where they can be honest about their doubts. We also need to provide an environment where they can truly meet the Lord and experience Him for themselves. Without a deep, strong spiritual experience in my own life during those times of intellectual testing and before I had discovered solid answers, that testing might just have pulled me away.

In the days to come, I'll be sharing some excerpts from my latest book, which reaches out to those who are questioning their faith (or have left the faith entirely).

But for the moment, I simply want to underscore the importance of us welcoming questions about our faith and challenges to our faith. In order to do this, we need to know the Lord for ourselves and have a strong foundation in our own lives, both spiritually and intellectually.

Only then can we love the Lord with all our hearts and with

all our minds. And only then can we help others love Him fully for themselves. {eoa}

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