

Transcript 174

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions Podcast. Joining me today is Voddie Baucham. We've had him on before. One of my favorite authors. I love how he's able to explain complicated concepts in ways that are easy to understand and also really hit home. So Voddie welcome back.

Voddie Baucham

Thank you very much. It's good to be with you.

Shea Houdmann

So Voddie also at the African Christian University teacher right now. So he's coming to us from Zambia, so hopefully the Internet connection will hold steady. But today we are going to be talking about your book, *The Ever Loving Truth*. This is actually the revised and updated version. So what led you to write this book originally and what are some of the changes you made in this new edition?

Voddie Baucham

You ever look, the truth is actually the first book ever wrote. The first book I published back in 2004. So this is almost the 20th anniversary of that book. And what led me to write it originally was, I mean, this was just kind of me putting my ministry and my passion on paper. This is just, you know, you, you cut me and I bleed practical apologetics, cultural apologetics, classical apologetics, and so that's that's what I wrote because because that's what my ministry then and and now was it was really about. And the reason that it made so much sense to do a revised and updated version of this was because of how relevant these ideas continue to be. And so it just seemed fitting, you know, two decades later to revisit it and to revise it, to update it and to, I I worked hard not to change too much because I really wanted the reader to just see the continuity. You know there are some things that have changed, but so many of the issues that we were dealing with then we're dealing with now just in a much, much bigger form.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely at GotQuestions.org we receive a lot of apologetics related questions. And it's interesting to see even in our twenty year history we launched in 2002. So we're saying 21 like wow, seems like such a long time, but it's how the questions have changed and adapted to the same questions. But sometimes they're just asked in a different way. And obviously the culture both the United States and around the world has changed and adapted to things that are going on. So let's start by going through three of the main topics that you cover in the book because I really like how each one you had some, like a powerful illustration to help us understand what's going on. So first, and truly we could do entire episode on each one. Yeah, I understand the struggle in trying to keep these brief. But what is relativism, and how should Christians respond to it?

Voddie Baucham

Relativism first thing with the new lens, right, relativism is the idea that their truth is not absolute. What's true for you is not necessarily true for me. What's true yesterday is not necessarily true today.

What's true here is not necessarily true there. So relativism is a commitment to that principle. There's various ways that it manifests itself, but the basic principle is that there is no absolute truth.

Shea Houdmann

And one of the illustrations you gave is, next time you hear someone say there's no absolute truth, you you want to punch them in the face.

Voddie Baucham

Yes,

Shea Houdmann

Explain me why that's wrong. So so yeah, Voddie your former football player, you're a big guy, so I'm very glad you're not punching me in the face here, but so when someone says that, how does that particular illustration really not that you would ever actually do that, but how does that illustration actually help you understand the the logical consequences of believing in relativism?

Voddie Baucham

Yeah, everybody knows that there's absolute truth. Another thing, if you don't want to punch people in the face and I don't actually recommend that we punch people in the face, but one of the things that you could do is ask them how they would respond if you push them in the face, right? Or if they say that there's no absolute truth, ask them if they're absolutely sure. Because if you're absolutely sure, there's no absolute truth, then that is internally self contradictory and you've just defeated your own argument. So it it doesn't work. And so people try to be more nuanced about it, and when they're more nuanced about it, what they'll say is that something to the effect of, you know, humans are really incapable of grasping truth. And so because of that, you know, we we shouldn't assert anything as being absolutely true. And, and of course, that that's again, that's the same argument just made another way. And with people trying to, you know, use a slightly lighter touch. But at the end of the day, you still end up in a world that's not workable.

Shea Houdmann

I'd also like your illustration of, let's say I wanted to put a swimming pool in my backyard and there wasn't quite enough room because your backyard fringes, so I'll just go ahead and move the fence 30 feet in your direction to give my backyard more room. Well, that felt right to me. So who are you to tell me that that's not right?

Voddie Baucham

Yeah. And who are you? Yeah. And who are you? Who are you to draw the lines? Right. Who are you to say that this is your property? And that's my property. And that's again, there's so many ways in which this just does not work.

Shea Houdmann

Second one, what is pluralism and how should Christians respond to it?

Voddie Baucham

Yeah. And I talked about a couple of different types of pluralism there. Right? There's there's a pluralism that's just factual, right? There, there's a pluralism that says, for example, you know, there are a lot of different people and people groups in the United States, and so in that sense, it's a pluralistic society. But there's also this sense of what's called cherished pluralism, which is the idea that we're we're better and that things are better and that having more ideas and more input is inherently better. This has really manifested itself, you know, recently in the way that people have approached hermeneutics in light of the social justice movement. Right. And so we're now arguing for a more pluralistic approach to interpreting the Bible and having more voices brought to bear on our interpretation. And arguing that it's superior by virtue of the plurality of of voices.

Shea Houdmann

And the religious pluralism, in a sense so many questions we're getting from people who either they're trying to understand other religions and they don't understand well, how can there not be many ways to God? I wouldn't. Why would God judge someone who was born in another culture who's genuinely trying to find God and all they've ever been taught is Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism, surely God will allow that person a different way to arrive at the mountaintop where God dwells, despite how many theological problems that statement right there even has, but that that concept that there's no one right way, that there's many, many paths to God.

Voddie Baucham

Yeah, and and and the idea too, again, the Bible very clearly says that there is none righteous and that there is none that seek after God. So the only way for you know that argument to have any merit is for the Bible to not be true. And of course, the other issue you know one of the illustrations I use is if I give you my phone number. Right. And and I want you to contact me, right. I'm giving you my phone number. I want you to contact me. And my number is, you know, 555-1234 and you look at my number and you say hey, this is great. Thank you for giving my number, your number. But what if I what if I call you at 555-1233 would that be OK? The fact of the matter is that won't work because that's not my number, right? And that's the problem with pluralism. There is a God who has revealed himself. And when we make an argument for pluralism, what we're saying is, hey, thanks God for condescending and for revealing yourself to us and the person and work of Jesus Christ. However, there are some things that we would just prefer from our God, so we're going to redefine you here, there and elsewhere. But when we do, we'd like you to be OK with it. And as we say in Texas, that dog won't hunt.

Shea Houdmann

Former pastor of mine like to describe it if there was another way, if God could save humanity through another means, would he of still chosen the way that he did for Jesus Christ, his only begotten son, to suffer the way, to die for the sins of humanity, to experience which he had to experience. That would be the ultimate example of the the cosmic child abuse. If God would do it that way, if there was any other way for him to accomplish, to say God sacrificed his son, but he didn't have to.

Voddie Baucham

Yeah, there's just a masochist, you know.

Shea Houdmann

That's just flies in the face of everything the Bible says about the exclusive claims of Christ and the exclusive provision of salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. So #3, tolerance. Why is tolerance such a big issue in the apologetics arena.

Voddie Baucham

Yeah, it's huge because, you know, modern tolerance is incredibly intolerant. You know, we we we used to, people used to be familiar with the famous Voltaire quote. You know, I, you know, respect your right, you know to to to disagree with me. Right. I will defend to the death your your right to disagree with me. But now we don't think that way at all. The new tolerance basically says that anything that makes a claim that is exclusive, has violated the one overarching principle by which we must live, and that therefore that thing must not be tolerated. So again it's self contradictory. It it, it just doesn't work because it can't tolerate intolerance, which means that it's by definition intolerant.

Shea Houdmann

We will only tolerate you if you tolerate everything else. So to speak without any sort of guidelines or restrictions on that tolerance. And like you said, it doesn't work because even the most tolerant person, it's not too difficult to poke at them enough to figure out something they're actually intolerant of.

Voddie Baucham

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. It really is. And and and and at the end of the day, it's whatever their version of intolerance is. Right. There's something out there that they define as intolerant. There's something out there that they define as a bridge too far, and as soon as they've done that, they've disqualified themselves.

Shea Houdmann

Obviously in Ever Loving Truth, you go into each of those 3 topics and much greater detail than we have time today. But let's switch gears a little bit. The specific the title, the Ever Loving Truth. Why do you emphasize the need to, so to speak, speak the truth in love so strongly in this book?

Voddie Baucham

Yeah. You know, first of all, it's a, it's a, you know it's a real, it's a real kind of Texas saying. And you know I'm I've always said I'm the worst kind of a Texan. I'm a Texan by choice, you know. And so the ever lovingness ever loving that just, it just it just fits in terms of a term or phrase. But also there's the idea that truth is permanent, right. And that truth is constant. And that truth is loving. Our God is truth and our God is love. And there is no contradiction between those things. In fact, in First Corinthians 13, Paul says, you know, that love doesn't rejoice in wrongdoing, but it rejoices in the truth. And so you, you know, I wanted to communicate that you cannot separate those two ideas. You can't have one without the other.

Shea Houdmann

I've known a lot of people who are like the two of us who are on fire for apologetics, love having these type of conversations, love, even debating, so to speak in the right context. But who their favorite verse of course First Peter 3:15. So always be ready to give an answer for the reason you hope that he's in you.

They've got that part down. They're always ready, they're always eager. Then they kind of fail in the second part of the verse, but do this with gentleness and respect.

Voddie Baucham

Gentleness and respect, yeah.

Shea Houdmann

And or may your speech be grace. Season with salt. They're really salty, but they miss out on the grace. So what's what's the problem with being a strong, prepared apologist but forgetting the the love part, forgetting the gentleness and respect part?

Voddie Baucham

I think if you if you're forgetting that, then you're not prepared because as you've just pointed out, you know we're we're we're missing half of the command there. And if you're missing half of the command again, you're you're not as prepared as you think that you are. The other issue is that as Christians, our goal is not to win the argument, but to win the man, and I think that's where people go wrong, right? We get that's. That's why there's so many, you know, teenage boys who come up to me all the time wanting to know what they need to do to, to be an apologist. And and nine times out of 10, it's just a young kid who loves to argue, he loves the sound of his own voice. He wants to be right and he wants to humiliate other people in his rightness. Right. And and. And so they think that's what, you know, apologetics is all about and and nothing could be further from the truth.

Voddie Baucham

You know, I define apologetics really from from that that text in First Peter three as knowing what you believe, why you believe it, and being able to communicate that in a winsome and effective manner. And that that's what we're called to do. And it's not offensive, it's defensive. Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you. And in in other words, if we're doing apologetics but not communicating to people the hope that is in us, and the hope is the gospel right. And there are a lot of people who are out there doing apologetics, making arguments about obscure, you know, philosophical, metaphysical ideas, but there's no gospel attached to it. Some of them because of a a spiritual immaturity, but others because of an approach to apologetics that they've accepted that, you know, basically argues that you've gotta earn the right to share the gospel. And that's just a dangerous place to be because in many instances, you know, we spend, you know, hours, days, weeks, months, years never feeling like we've earned the right to share the gospel. That's problem number one and problem #2 the gospel is what we're supposed to be giving a defense for.

Shea Houdmann

I love what you said earlier with that, our goal is not to win an argument. Our goal is to win a person. And just having that mindset shift has a dramatic impact on how you do apologetics. To the point there and like, OK, clearly me having this particular line of argument is causing this person to be hostile. I need to shift gears. I need to focus on, I need to focus on the Gospel. I need to point this person to ultimate true goal of biblical apologetics rather than trying to argue this particular point, which mayor often very often is not, an essential of the faith, it is a side issue. It is a matter of discipleship that comes later in the

Christian life, not something you need to deal with when you're actually trying to point someone to faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior.

Voddie Baucham

Yeah. And you know, the entire book is, you know, kind of an exposition of Acts 4. And I'm, I'm, I'm using that as the template. And you know, one of the chapters is, you know, talks about the fact that neutrality is not an option. The the the culture is is going to marginalize us and it's going to marginalize the gospel. And there's going to be a price to pay. And we see that in Acts Chapter 4 and Acts Chapter 5, that there is a price to pay. But we proclaim the gospel nonetheless. So we got to be really careful with any approach to apologetics that moves us away from the gospel because essentially what we end up doing is we're in danger of being man pleasers and and in danger of shaving the edges off, you know, the offensive parts of the Gospel so that we can continue to find favor with men rather than trying to help men find favor with God.

Shea Houdmann

And the ministry like Got Questions where people come to us millions of people visiting the website every month either asking us a question or searching the site and reading articles and so many of are searching for obscure things. They're want to know what about creationism? Or what about gifts of the spirit, or all these other issues are spending so much time on that. But the absolute favorite questions we received are ones related to the gospel. I remember the first time someone asked us, how can I know for sure I go to heaven when I die? And I was like, I remember calling out to my wife, who was in the other room and was like hey Hun, can someone get saved on the Internet? Yeah, it was like, I mean, we viewed ourselves as a discipleship ministry for, like, new believers. And the idea that non believers or seekers would be asking us questions were thrilling. So now we're as much as we have to and truly do enjoy talking about ancillary issues, but whenever we can answer one directly related to the gospel, those are by far our best. And I know so many Christians with would call soapbox or hobby horse issues where they're such so into this one particular issue. That's all they want to talk about. And I think they they miss it in terms of remembering to focus on the gospel. So with that in mind, how do we communicate to the next generation a passionate desire to follow Christ? How do we speak into a culture that is increasingly becoming hostile to the Christian message in how to present this ever loving truth in a way that communicates well to the next generation?

Voddie Baucham

Yeah, I go back to that definition, you know, know what you believe, you know, always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you. Right know what you believe, know why you believe it. Right. And then we do that with gentleness and respect. So know what you believe, know why you believe it and be prepared to communicate that in a winsome and effective manner. And the the reason I I choose that phrasing, winsome and effective is because it gets us off of railroad tracks, right? So many times when we present to people what we want to do is we we want to play, we want to play chess, right. You do this and then I'll do that. And then you do this and I'll do that. And we're not even listening to people. We're just waiting, you know, for certain keywords or key phrases so that we can, you know, pounce or or whatever. But when we talk about being winsome and effective, we have to bring in the idea of treating people as image bearers. We have to bring in the idea of not winning the argument but winning the man. We have to bring in the idea of our greatest desire

being for Christ to have the fullness of the reward for which he died. Right. I think if we continue to press that, then we'll prepare the next generation to do apologetics well, regardless of what the culture throws at us.

Shea Houdmann

Let's conclude here with a really like a practical question. Let's say we talked about relativism, pluralism, tolerance to things we're observing in our culture that fly against the the Christian message of of salvation, the gospel. We know young people are increasingly non Christian. I wouldn't say necessarily hostile, but just increasingly lost, increasingly like wandering, have no sense of direction. Specifically for younger people today who are growing up in this culture, what is a key point in how to share the gospel with them? Like if someone you know very little about them, they seem open, how do you begin that conversation?

Voddie Baucham

You know, one of the one of the best tools that I was given, this a long time ago, you know, early in my life as a Christian. Was to have a one minute testimony in your pocket. And by testimony, you know, I don't mean your whole life story. I mean, the story of how you went from someone who was lost to someone who heard the gospel and responded to the Gospel and became a Christian because of that response to the gospel. And, and I think if we've got that sort of one minute testimony in our pocket, you know nothing that's highly dramatized, you know nothing with gory details, but something that really communicates to people you know. I wasn't born into this. I was lost. I was not a believer. I heard the message of the gospel. And our testimony ought to include not just, I heard the message of the gospel, but I heard the message of, you know, Christ died for sin. I was a Sinner and needed a savior, you know about to, you know, face the judgment of God.

Voddie Baucham

I think if we have that sort of one minute, you know, testimony in our pocket, then what that does is number one, in those instances where that's all we get, at least we've communicated the Gospel. And #2 in those instances where there's more that opens up, at least we've established the foundation, right. And so that, that's that's that's what I like to tell people. And the other thing that that does is you know so many times we don't get to the gospel because we think that's gonna make us sound weird. That's gonna turn people off. That's going to make people, you know, recoil from us or whatever. When when you, when you get that out there, you sort of free yourself up from that, right. That we all of us have that man pleasing tendency. And when you get that out there and when you've told them the thing that is potentially most offensive to them, you can then move on from there with that weight lifted off your shoulders.

Shea Houdmann

That's a great point. Too many people fail to include their testimony as part of them sharing the gospel. Because when we live in a relativistic, pluralistic and tolerant society, one thing that people won't argue with is what happened to you when you make it personal like this was my personal experience. That is something that even in the society we find ourselves, the culture of today that, people won't argue against that that was legitimately your experience, and that's a great bridge and jumping off point to the rest of the conversation. And even stirring up questions and them asking, OK, that was your personal

experience. I want to know more about that rather than starting off with a can you tell me all your beliefs so then I can tell you where you're wrong. And that's sadly the way I hear a lot of very good apologists in terms of intellectual arguments beginning and conversation. Not with those exact words, but that seems to be kind of the spirit of it.

Shea Houdmann

I love how your book points people in the biblical direction in terms of how to do apologetics and how to present the ever loving truth. So Voddie your book is excellent and truly enjoyed reading it. Highly recommend it to our readers, so we'll include links to where The Ever Loving Truth can be purchased in the show notes for this episode at podcast.gotquestions.org and also when this video goes live on YouTube and the description there. So so Voddie, in conclusion, tell our audience a little bit about what are some things you got going on? What what are you particularly passionate about? And how can people learn more about the the ministry, the calling that God has called you to?

Voddie Baucham

Yeah, you know, I always I'm always anchored in the fact that I'm a a husband and a father. We have nine children. Seven of them still at home being home schooled. And you know, we have been here in the Lusatia for the last eight years. Came here to help start the African Christian University. So we're, you know, sort of rooted and grounded in that. And then of course, I have my, you know, itinerant preaching ministry and teaching ministry and writing ministry. And they can find out about all of that at VoddieBaucham.org if they want to find out about the the school, that's ACU-Zambia.com. And we'd love to hear from you.

Shea Houdmann

All right. And I'll include those links as well. So Voddie thank you for joining me today. I love our conversation. Again, Ever Loving Truth is a excellent book. Trying, already thinking about which articles on Got Questions I want to include that as the recommended resources. It's well worth reading. I don't remember reading it in the 1st edition but this revised updated version is excellent, so thank you for pouring yourself into it.

Voddie Baucham

Excellent. Thank you very much, brother. I appreciate it.

Shea Houdmann

Has been the Got Questions podcast with Voddie Baucham. Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.