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Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions Podcast. So occasionally on our podcast we'd like to invite a guest on, and that's the case today. Joining me today is Drew Cordell. He's the author of *Honest Christianity*, why people choose to believe. And as I was going through this book, I thought Drew as an interesting perspective on some of these things in a different even approach to how he does apologetics and worldview and leading people to faith in Christ. So I wanted to have him on today so we could just discuss some of these things. So, Drew, thank you for joining me today.

Drew Cordell

Thanks for having me on the show, Shea.

Shea Houdmann

And if you didn't notice, Drew has a little bit of an accent. He's from Australia. And as much as I enjoy an Australian accent and I really have him on for the quality of the book, not just so I could listen to talk. I promise that's not my motivation. So, but Drew, would you tell our listeners a little bit about yourself, how you came to faith in Christ and what led you to write this book?

Drew Cordell

Yeah. Thanks, Shea. Thanks for calling my accent quality. I don't. I don't get that too often. So yeah, look, I'm born and raised in in Perth, Western Australia. It's pretty much the most isolated city in the world, but it was a very ideal place to grow up. And I had something of a pretty ideal childhood. I had two loving Christian parents, who who were strong Christians and and really from a very early age, I was exposed to to Christianity and a lot of what I'd call you

know, those sort of modern cool contemporary churches. So I had a really great experience of Christianity growing up. And I'd say I had a Christian faith from as young as five right through my childhood years up to my teenage years. As is what is quite common, I sort of hit the university years and and somehow my faith just went dormant. I wouldn't say that I ever lost my faith or anything like that, but my faith just went quite dormant. And I I just struggled to sort of see any connection between my faith and the everyday that I was doing at university at that time. It felt like I was preparing for career and Christianity was probably just something kept to a Sunday experience with some abstract ideas. And yeah, look after after university I went and moved to the to London, which is what a lot of Australians do and and and started working over there. And and was, yeah privileged enough to meet a lot of other younger Christians who were really living and and breathing their faith in the in the cut and thrust of a of a big city like London. And that really challenged me and and that really ultimately brought my faith alive again. I realised I knew enough about the Christian faith that, you know, if it, if it, if it was true, then it had to invade and pervade every corner of your life. And and really from that point onwards, there's a as a 22 year old, 23 year old I really let let God in and and into every nook and cranny of my life, which is very exciting and also very scary. And look that led to me working for many years in in London. I was privileged, privileged enough to work with a lot of successful businesses and leaders over there. And yeah, look, being a being a Christian in our generation, it's quite quite a rare thing, particularly in in Australia and the United Kingdom, and so you'd enter into lots of discussions with people all across the board who are really interested in my faith and and asking challenging questions. You know, all about that, Shea, don't you?

Shea Houdmann

We've done a few over the years.

Drew Cordell

Yes. And as as time went on, I just you know, you'd finish a lot of conversations with people and they would often ask for another resource to refer people to to, yeah, examine these

questions further. And I recommended lots of books and the like, but I just felt there was a there was a gap in in the literary landscape that there wasn't a book which really articulated the the evidences and all the philosophical arguments and the best arguments for the Christian faith in a way that was suitably detailed enough, but that was also accessible by the layperson. There are obviously a lot of good, a lot of good books out there, but they were really focusing on scientific arguments. All the philosophical arguments. But there wasn't something which really laid out, I thought in in proper detail the the credibility of the Bible. Also felt that you know, there wasn't really a proper explanation in in a book around what, what the death and resurrection of Jesus means. A lot of books that would say or Jesus died for your sins, but there was no real explanation for the thinking person of what does that actually mean and how does that actually come about. And as I've said just previously, I just found that a lot of the tone in these books was somewhat unaccessible. And a lot of the times the authors would would shoot the the tough questions, not like Got Questions, of course, but just, yeah. And on tricky questions of sexuality and things like that, I just found authors, not even addressing the question or just shying away from it.

Drew Cordell

So yeah, I decided to write Honest Christianity about five years ago with with those themes and minds and it, and it covers off a lot of the classical questions that that people ask of Christianity. You know, what about what about slavery? What about past atrocities that the Church has committed, issues of sexuality, misogyny covers off all those and suffering all those hot topics it's it covers. But I think where it really excels in the early feedback I've gotten is the is the chapter on the Bible and establishing the credibility of it is really solid. I've tried to make it detailed enough so that it gives people what they need and not too detailed, so it becomes boring. So hopefully I found that balance and and like I said, I've just really really tried to make the tone as accessible as possible, so you don't need a a degree in theology to read it or or to explain it to a to a friend. It's it's written so that some, you know, a thinking person can digest it

and enjoy it I hope. So, yeah, Shea, look, hopefully it it helps people discover what I think the truth of Christianity is, and it's a beautiful thing. It's changed my life. I think it's great for the world. I don't think it's something that you just believe on a Sunday. I think this is something that invades and pervades every corner of your life in your career, in your relationships. God is a big God who cares about his creation and he wants people to live unto his purposes. So I just, I'm really hungry for for people to to learn that and and I hope that my book can can play a part in that.

Shea Houdmann

Well, fantastic. Now I I love your heart. I love your motivation. And let me ask you this, the actual title, Honest Christianity and why, why the term honest and what what what what about that is some specific to you in this book?

Drew Cordell

Yeah, look it it almost sounds a little bit silly at first hearing, doesn't it? It's it's a bit akin to saying healthy carrot. Christianity by its nature, is supposed to be honest. But yeah, I've, I've just felt that perhaps over over my journeys at Christian haven't always seen apologists and and Christian ministers at different points perhaps been honest around gaps in their argument or or shortcomings in the evidence that we have. You know, for instance, in, in, in my book I I mentioned that, you know, we don't have a lot of manuscripts between you know 0AD and 200AD. Rarely have us seen sort of apologists or other people just just mention that and disclose that. And it it, it doesn't mean that Christianity is suddenly untrue. But I just think that people just want an honest presentation of the evidences that we have without jumping to overly strong conclusions both sides of the aisle. And so there, that's where the the name came from. And and look potentially when I was living in London this is, you know, slightly silly, but I was a I was a fan of Honest Burgers. The burger chain over there, so hopefully I haven't broken copyright anything but honest has a has a somewhat of a good brand name. I think people,

people like the sound of it when they hear it, it feels positive and open. And yeah, that's how I came to it.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, I I don't think you need to worry about anyone trademarking the word honest. I think that's kind of like general communication rule exempts that word from being copyrighted by anyone. But no, that's fascinating. I I've to have experienced people overstating the case or making too strong an argument. When even like Hebrews 11 talks about how even we have to accept by faith that God exists. So even the core foundational truth on which everything else about Christianity falls apart. If God doesn't exist, everything we're talking about is pointless. Even that has to be accepted by faith. So don't think that you have to explicitly beyond the shadow of any doubt prove every single doctrine of Christianity in order for it to be believable. That's not what we're called to do. But ultimately, so much of our faith in Christ is based on trust. It's about faith. Not with the lack of evidence. But it's not all about being able to explicitly prove absolutely everything.

Drew Cordell

No, I absolutely agree with that. And you know, we do live in, in the year 2023, some 2000 years after you know, the the death of Christ. I think it's inevitable that, yeah, we're we're going to have lots of questions and there's going to be time gaps there. And look, I think they're really fascinating. Yeah, they're they're a challenge, to be sure. But I think the story of Christianity is a remarkable one to to think of the way that it's thread, its way through our history and everything, it it really is remarkable. You know, in particularly the story of the Bible and how that's come to be and and how that's pervaded, you know, Western culture and and many other things. I don't think that's something you can ignore. So yeah, like you said, you know, I don't think there's this sort of open and shut slammed down case like, of course you believe. Look, here's just the evidence. It, you just gotta look at it and and make a decision and and open your heart. I feel I I feel when people have an open heart, and I think when reading my book, you

know the reader does have to have an open heart. It's not. It's not written to that hardened atheist who really has incredibly strong philosophical ideas against the existence of God. It's not written to that person. I think there are plenty of good books out there and better books that I'd recommend for people in that realm. But yeah, if someone is open to just wanting to see the evidence in a in, in a, in a plain, unbiased way that then I think my book can help.

Shea Houdmann

Awesome. So on your website [honestchristianity.org](http://honestchristianity.org) you have a quote up there from CS Lewis. I love this quote and I honestly, I'd love to hear like specifically what book it's from, because I don't recall it directly, but the quote is Christianity if false is of no importance and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important. So I'm curious for you, why do you have that quote? I'm assuming it's a quote that you love. And how does that speak to you and the the ministry of the calling that God has on your life?

Drew Cordell

Yeah, great question. The quote I believe comes from his work *God in the dock*, which I believe is one of his lesser known works. But yeah, look, I love the quote. I overuse it a lot. My friends are probably sick of me quoting it. Why does it speak to me so much? Look, it's a direct challenge to me personally. I think I mentioned before just talking about my my story in in coming to faith. It was. I came to a realization that Christianity, you know, pervade, it's gonna either pervade everything or it's just not. And and I do think it is quite binary in a in a personal perspective like that. And I think it just challenges people out there. A lot of people and and you know, I don't wanna, I want don't want to get into the mind of CS Lewis it's that would be an interesting thing to do.

Drew Cordell

You know, what is he trying to say there? You know, I think in the culture he's trying to say to people, a lot of people perhaps in yeah, in the post war culture that he's that he's writing to in England and and beyond. A lot of people were, you know, having a bit of a party after the war

and perhaps being a bit more liberal in their lives. And he's just saying, look, you know, you can sort of try and pass off Christianity as just this sort of cultural thing. And Jesus is a good moral teacher and it's, you know, it just sort of dismissed Jesus. Sort of give it historical credibility. But at the same time, dismiss it. He's really saying, look, you can't really do that. Either this is the ball game or it's not. It's not. Jesus isn't something that you can just put on your bookshelf and go yeah, look, he's the most famous person of all time. Ohh well, I'm just gonna get on with my life and do my own thing. I think you are as human beings, compelled to make a decision as to as to who Jesus is. What he is in your life. So that that's probably a bit of a waffly answer, and that's a great question. I probably need to give it some more thought, but I think that's that's the essence of it. Be interested to hear your thoughts.

Shea Houdmann

No, it's to me it's similar to his famous trilemma. He's either a liar or lunatic, or he's Lord. It's like he can. He can't be just unimportant. That's that option is not left to us. He's either everything or he's nothing. So no, I think since it's not your quote, I'm so I don't have to ask you for your permission to use it. But I'm, I'm very interested in that concept as well. And I think it really does help to, different way of thinking about our life and to what priority we give to Christ. Not only is this people and human beings in general, but as Christians like is he just like part of your life or is he your life? I mean, it needs to be of utmost importance because he he's God. He's Lord and he's he's our savior.

Drew Cordell

Yeah. And I've. Yeah, absolutely. And I've look, I've, you know, watching The Chosen and I've particularly loved watching The Chosen because of you know it, it brings to life some of those stories with the disciples. And and obviously I, you know, I get there's a there's an element of artistic licence, but there's a you visually get a sense of the disruption that he's causing in these people's lives are both good and bad. And yeah I think I think he does that and I I I try not to focus on the bad so much. I think it's really exciting, you know, Jesus has disrupted my life

and it's it's really, really exciting. Yeah, to think that I'll be here speaking to you, you know, a business consultant from from Perth having written a book on apologetics. Yeah, it's thoroughly disrupted my life. And you know, all the better. It's a lot of fun. It's exciting.

Shea Houdmann

And to think that I I wanted to be a a computer programmer who was happy to let Jesus be a part of my life. But I knew that He would be my everything. That he would be my purpose for living, my purpose for serving, the thing I come to work every day and absolutely love to do. If you would ask me that question, how old am I now, 30 years ago, I would have, no, that's not me. But it's me now. So I it's amazing how God takes people like you and me, like millions of other people who turns their life upside down. And then this is an extraordinary way. It's far beyond anything we could ask or imagine.

Drew Cordell

Yeah. No, for sure. And yeah, look, it's you know that that's I really think there's a there's a space in the world where people don't, I think Christians don't really understand how much really God wants to invade and pervade their marketplace.

Shea Houdmann

Hmm.

Drew Cordell

And and that you know in in particularly in in our Western context, in, in working culture and and I've had my challenges with it, but I really don't think God wants you to hide your light under a bushel or he doesn't want you to be this raging maniac, I don't think. Or if he calls you to do that, great. You'd be obedient. Do it. But you know, I think there really is something to be to be challenged in our culture around, yeah you know when when culture is becoming less and less Christian, if you're not rubbing against the workplace and and and getting some sparks, I think there's a challenge there to go what's going on.

Shea Houdmann



Let me ask you two questions about your book and or really about Honest Christianity in general. I know it goes beyond the just writing a book. It's it's your, it's your life. It's something I always like to ask, people are interested and fascinated by apologetics, and I'll throw them both at you and then you can answer them and whichever order you choose. What to you is your favorite apologetics related question to answer and what to you is the most difficult apologetics related question to answer.

Drew Cordell

It's a great question. I'll start with the most difficult, the the most difficult one at the moment is, is the question on sexuality. So I've written a pretty honest and and direct chapter on that in the book where I adopt a conservative position on sexuality. So intellectually, I find it straightforward to answer, but just the the cultural temperature at the moment and and how high the emotions are, it's incredibly hard to answer it. Looked just recently I've probably lost a very close friend who holds very passionate views on this subject. So so that's been an incredibly hard journey for me, which I'm currently going through right now. So look, that question is incredibly hard.

Drew Cordell

The, the easiest or the the one that I enjoy answering the most ohh look, I probably need a bit of pause time on the podcast to to think about it. Look, I think, look this the suffering question, I enjoy engaging with it because often it's it's very deeply personal for people. They've gone through their their own experiences with with suffering. And look, it's something that I really struggle with and I think every Christian, you know, forever and a day will will struggle with the problem of evil and, and how that comes about in the world. But I'll probably enjoy talking about it because it just unpacks so much in the other person. It's a yeah, it really goes to to their life story a lot of the time. And I'm sure my listeners Shea can just relate to that themselves when they have friends and and family go through hardship. It it brings you closer together a lot of the time and it really does unpack people's stories and the challenges that they've had in life. So I

really enjoy that one.

Drew Cordell

The questions, you know, sort of around the past atrocities at the church and and does the Bible endorse slavery and a lot of those apologetic type questions, I you know, I never really think they're genuine objections to Christianity. I feel a lot of the times, those are those are questions which people use as excuses to belief. I'd be interested to hear your thoughts on that. Look, I've included them in the book because I feel that, you know, it's just a lot of times where people come to that point of what I'm wanting to make a decision for faith, they just want to make sure they're not signing up to something which endorses slavery, or which endorses misogyny or whatever. I don't think it takes much research to realise that it that it really doesn't, and it's more just a sense check a health check before people jump in. But I don't really think those questions are genuine. Look apart from persons who have, obviously suffered from slavery themselves. That that's a that's the caveat. I'd say there and other things, but yeah, I I hope that made sense.

Shea Houdmann

It it does. Like what you said about suffering, I agree with you. I enjoy those type of questions because suffering is a I could say a universal Christian experience, but our human experience, if not universal, nearly universal, something we can all relate to. And I've seen many apologists instantly go the philosophical route and trying to explain why God allows this and God is sovereign and all these things, and like this is actually a hurting person who right now just needs comfort. Very often the philosophical aspect comes later. But when a person just experienced a tragedy, they don't need a thorough lesson on the odyssey and what the problem of evil and all these different things, stuff like that can come later. What they need right now is love, and grace, and mercy, and compassion, the other things that are Christians are also called to do in addition to always being ready to give an answer for the hope that we have.

Shea Houdmann

In terms of, like the other questions, it's like the a lot of people who will like to go on a sidetrack in terms of something like Christians in the past supported slavery or supported misogyny or this particular church committees horrific crimes, it's like, yes, but can I show you how all of those things go directly against actual teachings of the Bible? Especially the teachings of of Jesus Christ.

Drew Cordell

Absolutely.

Shea Houdmann

Yes. Some of the bible was written into a culture society where those things were common, and maybe the Bible doesn't forbid them as strongly as we would like, but he's got to remember God is in the business of redeeming heart, transforming souls not in transforming a culture and a secular sense. So all that there are really good explanations we can give as Christians to those type of arguments. But now they're often they're just throwing up as a defense mechanism. But it's the only thing they know about Christianity is, well, 200 years ago, some Christians supported slavery. And it's like, yes, I can't deny that that's true. But I can show you from the Bible how that's not God's heart. It's not God's desire at all. So that's generally how I approach it.

Drew Cordell

No, absolutely. And yeah, in in your, in your words there, yeah, you just you raised the great just the great principle of exercising empathy with people. And it's something that I've gotta consistently remind myself to to do when someone asks a question. Yeah. Try and remember there's a person behind the question and and to really try and unpack that. Don't make any assumptions. Really try and put yourself in the shoes of person and and really lean in. And and and yeah, I've I think over the years I've gotten better at truly just trying to understand the person's perspective rather than hearing a question and then just sort of jumping in with an answer. I see that all, all too often, apologetics as, as you've said, just so critical to sit back ask

questions, listen, clarify questions as well. Yeah. I think for me, coming from a sales and marketing consulting background, that's really helped me just that you know, I've had lots of corporate training in, in that realm and you know it's, you know, selling and marketing is not about sort of throwing information at people and shoving ideas and arguments down people's throats. It's actually helping people to make an informed decision. And and that's what we as Christians need to do. That's what we call to do in that in that umm, defensive posture. So yeah, so critical, Shea.

Shea Houdmann

So, Drew, let me ask you this from my closing question and I know this the answers will depend greatly on the situation of the person you're talking to. But what have you found to be a really effective argument for the Christian faith when sharing with I, I would say the people of today. And I know that's incredibly broad. But just in your experience, what's what's an argument or a principle that you've been able to share that you found really seems to be catching people's interest today?

Drew Cordell

Yeah. Look, I wouldn't say, look, I wouldn't say there's really an argument per say. I I can't speak to your American context probably as well. I don't wanna make too many assumptions. I've spent most of my life in in the United Kingdom and Australia and a bit in America as well. But I, but I know that in particular, what I found is it's, it's not so much that there's one particular argument or something that that peaks a person's interest. It's they just don't see the the relevance of Christianity at the moment in our culture. We're just becoming less and less Christian. They see old church buildings. They might even see, you know, old church ministers, old terminology, quite conservative opinions, dogmatic styles of communication and are just people are just going they're just not interested. So if you can just create an interest, you know. And it's, you know, and for me it's as simple as telling someone that I'm a Christian. You know, it's as simple as when I get to the office on a Monday and I'm by

the water cooler and someone asked me what I've done for the weekend, you know, I I will tell them that I've gone to church. And and I think that's the most powerful thing. And over the years when, when people have seen me, you know, a relatively younger person who can speak English and and make an argument, and who goes to church, that really sows the seed in people's hearts, and suddenly they go well, OK, if there's something there for Drew then, then maybe there is something worth considering here. And and that generates interest.

Drew Cordell

And I think to my earlier point, you know, just around the marketplace and whether you're a mother or a grandma, you know, top flight management consultant, wherever you are, I think if you just let your faith invade and pervade all those corners, and I think it's as simple as saying I went to church on Sunday or we're going to church this this Christmas, and we're going to this carol service and whatever it may be. Or telling people, asking people if you wanna pray for them. I think that's the the first step that that we as Christians need to start making a lot. And I'm I'm and I'm talking to myself here. I don't want to come across that I do this all the time. I need to do it more and more. I think it's that.

Drew Cordell

Look in it in in addition as well, look, I think the science stuff and the new Atheism realm really has has come off the ball a lot. There's a book been written recently about that I think it might have been written by Justin Briley. I'm not too sure, but if people Google it there is a book that's been written about the new atheist movement, which I think highlights a lot of those sort of sort of naughty questions, have come off the boil. Shea. I mean, you'd be well placed to to talk to that. I think it is more, more social now issues around sexuality that people are interested in. You know, I think they're concerned that, hey, if I become a Christian am I suddenly gonna become this bigoted idiot which is taking away people's freedoms and and destroying people's identity. You know, is that going to happen? And I can confidently say no, it doesn't. But I think getting people to that place where they take a proper, honest look at it, I think it's the first

challenge. So being of the is the is the best recommendation that I would make.

Shea Houdmann

Well, Drew, thank you for that. I agree with you the the personal touch, the people seeing a difference in you. And just being bold is saying something as simple as, hey, I went to church can be, you can be a light and very very simple ways, and yet a powerful light at that. So Drew, thank you for coming on the podcast with me today. Honest Christianity, why people still choose to believe. If I were to describe the book in one word, I would describe it as honest. And that's probably what I appreciate most about it is that you strive to take a very honest look at these issues and not not overstate the case, but not understated either. But just like look, here are the reasons to believe with from a very honest standpoint, and very honest attitude, and a humble spirit. And so I really appreciate that as well. So Drew keep doing what you're doing. We'll include links to where Honest Christianity can be purchased. And it's well worth reading.

Drew Cordell

Thank you very much, Shea. That's very kind of you to say. And thank you for having me on the show. And and look, thanks again for the for the Got Questions Ministry. You've been doing this for a lot longer than me. And, and you've ministered to to people all across the globe, especially in furthest, farthest Perth, Australia. People down here love the the honest approach that you take to to your ministry and may may it long continue.

Shea Houdmann

Well, thank you for that encouragement. Appreciate that as well. This has been the Got Questions podcast with Drew Cordell, author of Honest Christianity. Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.