

Christian Apologetics

Phil Stilwell ·



All-star contributor

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☉ Many Christians believe the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and our moral intuitions provide a consistent foundation for how to live. But a closer look shows the opposite: the Bible contains contradictory and troubling commands, moral intuitions vary wildly across cultures, and the Spirit's supposed guidance produces conflicting convictions. On top of that, Christians are told they must accept God's authority as moral before they have any way to test it—an unmistakable circle. Surveys confirm that Christians themselves cannot agree on key issues like sexuality, sin, and violence, showing that no unified standard exists. The unavoidable conclusion is that biblical morality collapses under its own claims of coherence. What's left is not clarity but confusion, not objectivity but blind obedience. That is a serious problem if the system is supposed to provide a universal moral compass. If you think this conclusion is mistaken, I invite you to explain how these contradictions can be resolved—because so far, every pillar of biblical morality fails to stand.

↘ <https://freeoffaith.com/morality/>

Chris Hooter

Where to begin... lol. The Bible is not a coherent novel, w a beginning, intro characters, built a plot, etc ... it is a collection of works, somewhat unrelated, cobbled together over time, even edited from time to time, and in the case of the OT, we are talking a timeframe of MILLENIA ...

Well, in that "way back when setting", where lifespans are short, disease is rampant, illiteracy is the norm, theres no time for "extreme" individual liberties and expressiveness... it's tribal, get over it.

Well, that setting is just different than today

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Chris Hooter the fundamental question is simple. Are you able to coherently differentiate between what is moral and what is immoral with an unambiguous set of principles not riddled with ad hoc rationalizations? ☑

If so, simply lay out that moral system. ☑

But I may have misunderstood you. Are you a Christian? ☑

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Chris Hooter

Phil Stilwell well, in the way back when setting I just described, something like "sexual liberties" we tolerate today "must" be reeled in "back then" for not just the good of the community, and its cohesiveness, but perhaps its very survival. So, the answer to something like sexual morality today COULD (whether or not it SHOULD i sidestep for the moment) may very well have different answer then vs now

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Phil Stilwell

Chris Hooter so you don't have a biblical foundation for your morality, right? ☑

- 1w
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- Reply

Chris Hooter

Phil Stilwell I'm Roman Catholic

- 1w
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- Reply

Chris Hooter

Phil Stilwell my morality is based on the teachings of Apostolic Church, of which the Bible is a part, but not the only part

Its their job, their role to sort all this out. These issues are complicated

But in general, the CC (& EO, OO) are pretty conservative re moral teachings (Francis' ambiguity aside)

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Chris Hooter My question is whether you have a system of morality by which you can know with certainty, based on particular principles, that Action A is immoral while Action B is immoral? What is that system? And will I discover that those citing the very same foundation for morality will disagree with your moral conclusions?

- 1w
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- Reply

Chris Hooter

Phil Stilwell The Church clearly has a system of morality, and ill defer to them ... and its pretty conservative... if i find myself in a moral delimma, ill ask my priest

- 1w
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- Reply
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Phil Stilwell

Chris Hooter How do you know that your priest will provide an actual moral solution? Do you have a system to determine the accuracy of his response, or is it based on blind faith and obedience?

- 1w
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- Reply

Chris Hooter

Phil Stilwell but you do? Lol

- 1w
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- Reply

Chris Hooter

Phil Stilwell there's three people you dont lie to: your doctor, your lawyer, your priest.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Chris Hooter I think "morality" is an empty term created as a facade on top of emotions. Its use is an effort to reify emotions, to give them obligatory weight. I have been challenging both theists and unbelievers on this for years, hoping someone could at least begin to substantiate an actual moral realm. No one has been able to do so thus far.

Would you like to try?

I'm sure you'll agree that any genuine moral calculus will be clear and unambiguous if it is to ground a moral realm. Let me first compare your moral calculus with the moral calculus of other theists. I will then ask you to "show your work" in arriving at your "moral" conclusions. Answer the following:

1a: It would be immoral not to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

1b: It would be morally permissible to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

2: It is immoral for divorced individuals to remarry.

3: It is immoral to have meals with apostates from Christianity.

4: It is immoral to knowingly exceed speed limits.

5: It is immoral for married couples to engage in oral or anal sex.

6: It is immoral to practice circumcision or clitoridectomies.

7: It would be moral for a government to kill homosexuals for being homosexual.

8: It is immoral to intentionally make someone believe you feel the opposite of what you actually feel about something.

9: It is immoral to spend this earthly life enjoying earthly pleasures when unGospelled unbelievers face eternity in Hell, when you will have eternity in Heaven to relax.

10: It is immoral to fight for a country in a war merely for more territory.

11: It is immoral to divorce over a spouse merely romantically kissing another individual.

12: It is immoral not to send money to help someone you know is starving to death.

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- Reply

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Andrew Higgins

Chris Hooter

When you say "It's tribal, get over it," you're saying "These are terrible circumstances, get over it." Or, paraphrasing a bit more: "God put us in terrible circumstances, get over it." Or, maybe you actually meant "God is powerless to prevent these terrible circumstances, get over it."

It's like you don't actually believe that God is Sovereign.

- 1w
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- Reply

Chris Hooter

Andrew Higgins i'm simply saying the conditions of 1500BC are not those of 2025AD. That's all I'm saying

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Andrew Higgins

Chris Hooter

Well, I'll say a bit more - they're worse. They are objectively worse circumstances, and a big part of what makes them so bad is that they encourage the worst in us, or they are less likely that newer environments to bring out the best. If it was an intentional choice to place us in circumstances where sinning would be more likely.... wow.

- 1w
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- Reply

Chris Hooter

Andrew Higgins if you need an antibiotic shot, or a new kidney, or angioplasty, its easy to opine how things are 'worse' today than then... but that don't make it objectively so. Like everything else ... its complicated

- 1w
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Phil Stilwell

Chris Hooter My question is whether you have a system of morality by which you can know with certainty, based on particular principles, that Action A is immoral while Action B is moral? What is that system? And will I discover that those citing the very same foundation for morality will disagree with your moral conclusions?

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Andrew Higgins

Chris Hooter if you genuinely think things were better then, what the heck are you doing on the internet? You look me in the eyes, dead serious, and tell me heroine kills while you're injecting. I don't believe that you believe what you're saying, because that's not at all how you've chosen to live.

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Matty Dou

Understanding is given by God through the Holy Spirit. Without it you are incapable of submission to The Creator.

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Matty Dou so everyone with the Holy Spirit will arrive at the same moral conclusions, right? ☒

- 1w
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- Reply

Andrew Sills

Phil Stilwell ultimately, yes. But then we have to define what "ultimately" means.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Andrew Sills Will everyone with the Holy Spirit here and now arrive at the same moral conclusion?

- 1w
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- Reply

Andrew Sills

Phil Stilwell if they truly have the Holy Spirit now, yes.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Andrew Sills Let's test that.

I think "morality" is an empty term created as a facade on top of emotions. Its use is an effort to reify emotions, to give them obligatory weight. I have been challenging both theists and unbelievers on this for years, hoping someone could at least begin to substantiate an actual moral realm. No one has been able to do so thus far.

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Timothy Riker

Lots of claims in your stated post. What evidence do you have for your claims?

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Timothy Riker over the years I have scrutinized every system of morality proposed to me and found them all to distill to either blind obedience or raw emotions. But let's hear about your particular moral system. ☑ I'll give it a fair assessment if you commit to answering my follow up questions.

- 1w
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- Reply

Timothy Riker

My moral system is based on the Christian Bible. What is your evidence for contradictory and troubling commands from Scripture?

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Timothy Riker Do you have a coherent system of morality that does not, once scrutinized, dissipate into blind obedience or raw emotions?

The source article may help: <https://freeoffaith.com/morality/>

FREEOFFAITH.COM

The Absence of a Coherent Biblical Morality

The Absence of a Coherent Biblical Morality

- 1w

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Timothy Riker

Phil Stilwell where are you basing your claim that the morality of Biblical Christianity is blind obedience to God's commands?

The examples in the article of Scriptural commands such as endorsing slavery are based on an uncritical reading of the Bible. Slavery in the Bible is an acknowledged reality in a fallen world, but not part of God's design, like the institution of monarchy in Israel, and polygamy.

The Bible isn't a monolithic codex of prescription. It is a compilation of documents that follow an overarching theme. Strangely enough, the focus of the Bible in its entirety is not how to live morally. Rather, the Bible shows how humanity rebels against God's original design for creation, fails to reconcile with God on its own merit, and is ultimately redeemed by God. Morality is restored not by my actions, but by God's. I can attempt to live a good moral life based on the clear commands of Christ to love God and love others, but I also know I can't do these perfectly because I remain fallen. But by God's grace, I am saved from the condemnation of my fallen nature and now can strive against sin with the hope that I will be able to experience God's presence once He calls me home to Him.

- [1w](#)
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Phil Stilwell

Timothy Riker Let me explain why your response doesn't actually resolve the challenge I raised.

✓ You acknowledge that the Bible "isn't a monolithic codex of prescription" and that it reflects human fallenness. But this concession reinforces my point: if the Bible contains descriptions of institutions like slavery, polygamy, or monarchy that are not moral prescriptions, then the question becomes how do you distinguish which commands are descriptive and which are binding moral norms? Christians themselves disagree deeply on this very point—as the survey data show on issues from sexuality to violence. Without an independent standard, each Christian is left deciding selectively what "really reflects God's design." That is subjectivity, not objectivity.

✓ You emphasize the "clear commands of Christ" to love God and love others. But even those commands immediately raise interpretive conflicts: what does it mean to "love God"? Does it mean obeying every biblical injunction attributed to Him, even genocide or stoning? What does it mean to "love others" when passages condone slavery or eternal torment? The problem is that the Bible itself provides conflicting models, leaving no coherent way to arbitrate.

✓ You say morality is "restored not by my actions, but by God's." That shifts the frame to redemption theology—but it sidesteps the moral coherence problem. The question I'm pressing is not how salvation works, but whether the Christian framework supplies a coherent moral standard. And on that front, your explanation still comes down to trust God's authority, which is precisely the blind obedience I identified. God is assumed moral because His commands say so, and His commands are assumed moral because they come from Him. That's circular reasoning, not evidence.

So the evidence for my claim comes directly from (1) the contradictory and troubling commands in the Bible itself (slavery, genocide, harsh punishments), (2) the demonstrable disagreements among Christians about which commands apply, and (3) the absence of any independent standard to verify that what God commands is actually moral. The result is not clarity, but fragmentation.

- [1w](#)
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- [Reply](#)

Timothy Riker

I think overall you are misapprehending how Christians and the Bible understand morality in your attempt to superimpose a perfectly coherent moral system without a perfect moral law-giver.

Your article posits that it is circular to assume an objective moral standard when the moral standard is based on the giver of a moral standard. That's a strawman portrayal of how God's law works.

Let me respond to your first question, about distinguishing between what is descriptive and what is prescriptive and how Christians understand the difference. Let's narrow it further to the issue of slavery. There are no scriptures that support the enslavement of people. There are passages that point to how slaves are to be treated (with civility and dignity), and there are instances where God commands the nation of Israel to subdue and enslave specific groups of people as part of His judgement; which also is contrasted with God allowing the people of Israel to be enslaved by Babylon and Persia as part of His judgement as well. But these passages are not established as a principle to guide human relationships. Rather, they are either a call to treat slaves well, or as a mark of God's historical judgement upon nations. In contrast, there are other belief systems in the world that outright state that believers are called to enslave the non-believers. You don't find that kind of talk in the Bible.

You also claim that Christians are fragmented on this issue. Let's keep it in the context of slavery. Historically, people have claimed slavery as Biblically sanctioned. But it was also Christians who were the primary proponents of abolishment. Christians today by and large condemn slavery, and the anti-human trafficking movement is driven in a large part by the efforts of Christian-affiliated groups. One can go into a lot of depth about the shift here, but I think that you will find that the roots of abolition trace to the letters of Paul, and the statements made by Jesus himself. And so it is likely that Christianity contains the seed of abolition that took time to take root in response to social realities. In the case of slavery, it can be suggested that historical forces shifted to align with Biblical morality. And at the end of the day, Christians do not treat slavery as a morally ambiguous issue.

- 1w
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- Reply
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Phil Stilwell

Timothy Riker it makes no sense for their to be an objective moral system under which everyone is accountable, yet that objective moral system is not clear to everyone.

Right?

If God is to be righteous, you can't commit a sin you are unconscious of. ☒

- 1w
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Timothy Riker

Phil Stilwell actually you can, and this possibility exists if you understand sin the way the Bible teaches us what sin is. The objective moral law is simply absolute perfect holiness. No lying, no stealing, no murder, no hatred, no covetousness. It is pursuing and knowing God as intimately as Adam and Eve in the Garden, when God Himself clothed them even after the Fall. That is the moral system we are called to uphold. In order to be righteousness enough to be considered good, one needs to be perfect. God's holiness is such that it allows for nothing short of absolute moral perfection.

We are all aware that we are doing something wrong at some level. We can rationalize it, we can excuse it, we can compare ourselves to others and say we are not as bad or even as evil as they are. But at the end of the day, no human being can claim perfection, not one.

The evidence for this is shown anthropologically, historically, and in social psychology. No social group of human beings has ever existed, been encountered, or developed in a controlled environment that has not developed some kind of system of rules based on an appeal to moral principle. Humans inherently organize themselves as a society. That is consistent with the moral law suggested in Paul's letter to the Romans. We are aware of the need for morality, but no system we can come up with will ever be perfect in the way God intends it to be. God shows this in the Old Testament when He himself gives a standard of moral perfection to Israel, and yet even they fail in that regard. We all fail. If it was you or me in the Garden, we would have eaten the fruit too.

- 1w
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Phil Stilwell

Timothy Riker No, we don't justly punish people who unconsciously violate the law. Neither would any God of justice.

Have you ever spanked a child for breaking one of your rules that they knew nothing about? How did you feel?

If there is to be a coherent moral system, it will need to be mentally accessible to all to whom it pertains. Unless Christians agree on their moral system, they do not have a coherent moral system.

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- Edited

Timothy Riker

Phil Stilwell first, in no country in the world does ignorance of a law allow exception from the law. Laws can be broken whether you know them explicitly or not, in any human society. To your example of my children, I will definitely punish any of my kids who does something egregious enough to warrant it, whether or not I explicitly told them not to; i do not need to explicitly tell them not to set the curtains on fire or throw a bottle at the tv. If they did, they would be fully held accountable in the appropriate manner.

Second, it is a mistake to conflate Christianity with some kind of moral system, of which it is not in its essence. In order to interrogate it properly, you have to understand it properly. The fault in your legal assumption that ignorance of law equates exemption from the law notwithstanding, it is evidentially true that humans in general are aware of morality and

their tendency to break it. Christianity doesn't prescribe a moral system, it describes it in very unequivocal ways. And it also shows that human attempts at morality fall apart in application. Humans cannot agree on a moral system by their nature. Christianity shows this.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Timothy Riker In every country in the world, the degree to which someone is punished for breaking a law that is unknown to them, to that degree the punishment is unjust.

Your thinking is very Christian, but that is not a good thing in this case.

Simply reflect on whether you would spank a child for saying a bad word they innocently picked up at school. To the degree that you would punish your child, to that degree you are an unjust parent.

Now, Christianity claims to have a moral system. I'd like you to lay out that system so I can assess it for logical coherence.

Your notion that innocent people can be punished for innocent acts is not a very good start, but I'd like to hear more about what you consider to be "moral" to provide a comprehensive assessment (possibly condemnation) of your alleged moral system. Can you at please provide your principles under which you distinguish between what is moral and immoral? Or is it blind obedience?

- 1w
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- Reply

Timothy Riker

Phil Stilwell If someone commits arson in a country and claims they didn't know arson was illegal in that country, would they get a lighter sentence? That's absurd.

The principle of punishment does occur in degrees, but there are consequences for all transgressions.

You say Christianity claims a moral system and I already explained what that is: absolute perfect application in all circumstances. The standard of perfection is the Garden: do not try to be like God. He provided everything, gave us no other rules to live by. God established these rules as a Creator for his created system, and gave humans the choice to obey it or not, saying that choosing otherwise would cause death and suffering to enter the world. That is the moral system Christianity described. One rule.

- 1w
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Phil Stilwell

Timothy Riker Your response actually sharpens the incoherence I was pointing to.

✓ You now reduce the Christian "moral system" to one rule: "don't try to be like God." But that's not what most Christians mean when they speak of a moral framework. They point to the Ten Commandments, to Jesus' "love God / love neighbor" summary, or to Paul's lists of virtues and vices. If the whole system reduces to one rule, then the long catalogue of biblical injunctions—slavery laws, dietary restrictions, purity codes, commands to kill idolaters, and even the Sermon on the Mount—must either be irrelevant or contradictory to that one rule. That's not coherence; that's selectivity.

✓ You compare transgression of divine law to arson laws, but your analogy falters. Civil law only works when it is made accessible—posted publicly, taught in schools, explained in court. And even then, ignorance does affect culpability. A child who lights a curtain on fire out of curiosity is not sentenced like a terrorist who sets a bomb. The degree of knowledge is always factored into judgments. If God is truly just, why would He hold humans eternally culpable for breaking rules they could not have known with clarity?

✓ You affirm "absolute perfect application in all circumstances." But that claim is self-defeating: no human can achieve it, and Christians disagree profoundly on what it even requires. A system no one can fulfill, and which believers interpret in contradictory ways, fails as an operational moral framework. It collapses into what I have been arguing all along: blind obedience to whatever one assumes God meant, or raw emotions filtered through conscience.

So my question remains: if the Christian moral system is "one rule," why does Scripture itself present a sprawling and contradictory set of commands? And if knowledge of that rule is the condition for culpability, why does the evidence of history show profound disagreement and confusion among those who claim to know it best?

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Kevin Krumm

The morality we find biblically is ridiculously simple and consistent. Men (humanity) over complicate what we find in an attempt to justify their actions and failures to meet the standard. It seems to me that you use the failure of man to justify your disbelief of what we find biblically.

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- Reply

Revita Page

Kevin Krumm agree

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- Reply

Andrew Higgins

Kevin Krumm

Biblical morality doesn't look so simple. On the one hand, you've got folks like Noah carefully distinguishing between clean and unclean animals, because God said that was important, and then you've got a New Testament message where the deity who speaks in the New Testament commands us to never repeat what Yahweh said to Noah - NEVER call anything unclean that was made by God. We're like a 5 year old in a home with parents on the verge of divorce, and you say it's simple.

- 1w
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- Reply

Kevin Krumm

Andrew Higgins easy... there are things that are clean and things that are unclean....neither of which keeps you from being with God eternally. Thank God we're not 5 yr olds.

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Andrew Higgins

Kevin Krumm

Weren't you commanded to never call anything unclean that was made by God?

- 1w
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- Reply

Kevin Krumm

Andrew Higgins are you referring to Peter's vision??? If so, what was the actual "command", was it not to call anything unclean/common that "has been made clean" by God, note the distinction of made clean vs just made. Anyway, I thought what Christ did on the cross made those things clean, the things Peter claimed he had never eaten?

I'm not sure that makes what Noah was doing wrong...as he was commanded by God to do so... but take note that both are included in this particular plan of salvation.

I Suppose it would be confusing to a 5yr old, but again neither of us are.

- 1w

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- [Reply](#)

Andrew Higgins

Kevin Krumm

Are you imagining that God made this collection of animals for Peter, and then re-made them a second time before showing him the animals?

- 1w
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- [Reply](#)

Kevin Krumm

Andrew Higgins I don't know man... it says he saw bunch of animals and was told to rise and eat...and he says (in typical Peter fashion) I've never eaten those and God basically reminds him that they've been made clean

- 1w
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- [Reply](#)

Andrew Higgins

Kevin Krumm

In this story, God tells Peter these animals were made clean. And they were made for Peter. These animals were never unclean. No animals were, if you follow this logic, because no animal has ever made the soul unclean. This author is a heretic from the Jewish point of view. He does not believe in the Jewish distinction between clean and unclean, just as the author likes the heretical notion that it wasn't God who delivered this awful law, just an angel.

You say "in typical Peter fashion" as if you really know how Peter talks. And you probably think you know that from reading Acts, amongst other sources. You read Peter react to the voice in the air with "Lord!" and think, aha, that's Peter... nevermind that the author of Acts has every single person give the same kind of response. Not once does anyone fail to call the voice Lord. But, I imagine, you don't see this as bad storytelling, it's just a coincidence that everyone talks the same. And you probably really believe that Peter said he supports Paul's un-Judaizing of the Jesus movement. No doubt you think Peter heard Jesus himself say everything is now clean. And yet, you also believe that Galatians is authentic, like me. So you believe Paul wrote a letter disparaging Peter for holding onto his old ways.... after Peter had publicly declared that he agrees with Paul, after Peter had a triple divine revelation telling him better, and after he told everyone that he understood this message, and after Jesus himself told him that Paul's way is right..... that's incredible. What an incredible thing to believe. I don't have enough faith in the proposition that the apostles were severely retarded to buy that story. I think they had normal intelligence, above average intelligence, or slightly below average intelligence, and none of those hypotheses are compatible with your story.

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- [Reply](#)

Kevin Krumm

Andrew Higgins man... I'm just not following you, maybe dumb it down for those of us in the back. I've read your comment many times and I'm not sure I understand what it is you think I believe.

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- [Reply](#)

Andrew Higgins

Kevin Krumm

One of the least believable elements of Christianity is the false claim that Jesus told the disciples to abandon the Jewish law, because Galatians tells us the truth.

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- [Reply](#)

Kevin Krumm

Andrew Higgins so Paul is wrong?

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- [Reply](#)

Andrew Higgins

Kevin Krumm

I'm saying I trust what Galatians tells us about Peter. That's the problem for Christianity. To be a mainstream Christian, you have to believe that Peter is a world class retard who over and over acknowledges that God has said no more

worrying about pork, and then after that is still telling everyone that they need to worry about pork. And that's crazy. But that's not all. Not only do you have to believe that this man is profoundly mentally retarded, you also need to believe that Peter wrote in high Greek, with exceptionally strong style indicating several years of formal training. What a mess. Good luck.

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Kevin Krumm

Andrew Higgins I think it's feasible that Peter understood that what one ate no longer dictated observance of the law and what Christ had done abolished the old covenant... but still thought it only pertained to the Jewish peoples... the vision of prancing animals and the voice telling him to stop calling unclean what God made clean (the Gentiles) opened his eyes that this salvation was/is for everyone but maybe only after his meeting with Cornelius and then conversation with Paul after his own "awakening".... Maybe it's what he needed to finally get it, which he admittedly did. I don't think Peter was profoundly mentally retarded, just a little confused as all 12 of them seemed to be the entire time they walked with Jesus. I don't think it's messy, I think it's human... we tend to muck up what's simple.

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Andrew Higgins

Kevin Krumm

"Just a little confused" is an incredible description of a man who devoted his life to spreading a message that he fundamentally doesn't understand. And, we're told, this confusion about fundamentals is the rock on which the church was built. I guess that explains why we've got 101 versions of Christianity.

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Phil Stilwell

Kevin Krumm You and I will agree that it is unloving to hack infants into pieces...all the way up to the point that you read 1 Samuel 15:3. At that point, defending your God will put you at odds with love and invert what you deem to be immoral into a sudden blindness towards your God's character.

- 1w
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Kevin Krumm

Phil Stilwell, but what is being relayed about Gods morality in this passage, did he not condemn the immorality of the Amalekites and punishes them justly. You and I can agree or not and use this passage as either of us see fit (because that's what's humans do)... what I see is a consistent God that does not allow "immortality" and judges it accordingly. FWIW, I don't like the idea of anyone going to hell... but if what I read in the Old Testament God will justifiably punish those that deserve it.

- 1w
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- Reply

Lalo Guzmán

Kevin Krumm Keep in mind that it was not God who "judged them" in a practical sense. It was the Israelites, under God's command. The Israelites were told to carry out a genocide, including the children who would've been the victims, not the oppressors. If you want to believe that the genocide and the killing of children is an objectively immoral and unjustifiable action today that no human should do, then you're most certainly not dealing with a ridiculously simple and consistent moral standard.

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Kevin Krumm And the Amalekite infant deserved it, right?

I think "morality" is an empty term created as a facade on top of emotions. Its use is an effort to reify emotions, to give them obligatory weight. I have been challenging both theists and unbelievers on this for years, hoping someone could at least begin to substantiate an actual moral realm. No one has been able to do so thus far.

Would you like to try?

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12: It is immoral not to send money to help someone you know is starving to death.

- 1w
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- Reply

Kevin Krumm

Phil Stilwell it's not my place to determine whether any of the Amalekites deserved it, you seem to of made it yours tho.

They had obviously done or were doing something that God judged worthy desolation and the punishment was death. Not unlike our current predicament where the punishment for sin is still death, like it's a constant theme. Neither of us can like it, but it is pretty simple to understand, not follow the law then or reject grace now and the punishment is death.

I will not play your game, only because I don't think it will bear fruit. You seem as convinced of your position as I am in mine and neither of us will budge. I'll tell you where I think you're wrong and you'll tell me where you think I'm wrong. I think your argument boils down to "if I were God, I would have done it this way and because he didn't I choose to not believe".

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Kevin Krumm Before you leave, at least answer this: Had you been an Israelite, would you have hacked an infant into pieces if you thought God told you to do so? What universal moral principles would allow you to decide?

- 1w
-
- Reply

Kevin Krumm

Phil Stilwell probably, but only if I believed God was sovereign. Judge me if you will... but I'm pretty certain that you'd answer the same if you honestly answer your own question...

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Kevin Krumm Your answer illustrates the very collapse I've been pointing to.

✓ You said you probably would hack an infant to pieces if you believed God commanded it. That's not morality; that's obedience to power. The moment you concede that killing infants can be "moral" if God orders it, you've emptied the word

“moral” of any fixed meaning. It becomes nothing more than “whatever God says,” which is indistinguishable from blind obedience.

✓ Notice how this differs from genuine universal principles. A coherent moral calculus would yield the same verdict regardless of who commands it—infant-killing would be wrong whether commanded by a king, a prophet, or a deity. But your system allows any action, however cruel, to be flipped into “good” if God orders it. That is not moral reasoning, it is moral surrender.

✓ And here’s the critical point: Christians don’t even agree on what God commands. Some justify slavery, others denounce it; some affirm killing in God’s name, others reject it; some defend eternal torment, others call it inconsistent with divine love. The alleged “sovereignty” produces not convergence but fragmentation.

So my challenge remains: if morality means nothing more than “whatever God says,” then Christianity hasn’t solved morality—it has dissolved it. That is precisely why I argue that biblical morality collapses under its own claims to coherence.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

A simplified version of the logic:

If morality is simply defined as “whatever God commands,” then anything at all—even something we would normally see as horrific—becomes “moral” if God orders it. That is the Divine Command position. But this immediately collapses when we look at biblical examples such as the command to kill Amalekite infants. On one hand, if God commanded it, the system declares it moral. On the other hand, any reasonable account of morality requires that certain core harms, like slaughtering innocent children, are always wrong regardless of who commands them. The result is a direct contradiction: the very same act is both moral and not moral.

If one tries to avoid this contradiction by saying “moral just means commanded by God,” then the word “moral” has no content beyond obedience. It ceases to function as an independent standard; it becomes a mere synonym for “command.” That means the system doesn’t deliver morality—it dissolves morality into authority.

Even setting that aside, we can see that Christians themselves do not agree on what God commands. Some say slavery was permitted by God, others insist it was never moral. Some defend eternal torment as just, others call it inconsistent with God’s character. This disagreement shows that even if God’s command were the standard, the human practice of identifying what God commands produces deep and persistent division.

So the system fails in three distinct ways: it generates contradictions when God commands core harms, it collapses morality into nothing but obedience when “moral” is defined as “commanded,” and it produces fragmentation instead of consensus when believers disagree on what God has commanded. In any of these ways, the result is the same: the Christian moral framework, as defended, is not coherent.

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Kevin Krumm

Phil Stilwell don’t say I didn’t tell you... your commentary can be summed up with “I won’t submit to a higher authority”. BTW... if you were an Israelite then you’d be covered in blood as well, because you would have been witness to Gods authority.

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- Reply

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Ian D. McDonald

Phil, your scattergun approach makes engagement with the subject impossible. Why on earth should I or anyone else respond to your request when you have put forward no argument yet. You make a number of assertions, viz.

1. the Bible contains contradictory and troubling commands,
2. moral intuitions vary wildly across cultures
3. the Spirit's supposed guidance produces conflicting convictions
4. Christians are told they must accept God's authority as moral before they have any way to test it
5. an unmistakable circle
6. Surveys confirm that Christians themselves cannot agree on key issues like sexuality, sin, and violence, showing that no unified standard exists
7. The unavoidable conclusion is that biblical morality collapses under its own claims of coherence

But you offer no evidence in support of them.

Were a responder to play by the same rules their "you're mistaken" would carry exactly the same weight logically as the points you have made and the potential for an exciting exploration of your worldview would be lost.

- 1w
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- Reply

Andrew Higgins

Ian D. McDonald

We see on this site plenty of pro-Christian posts that are similarly shotgun style. I agree with you that it's not a great way to make intellectual progress, but it's weird to complain about this one instance when it happens a lot.

- 1w
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- Reply

James Hodge

Andrew Higgins I usually just silence those ones. Often not worth commenting

- 1w
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- Reply

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Phil Stilwell

Ian D. McDonald Did you read the source article? \ <https://freeoffaith.com/morality/>

FREEOFFAITH.COM

The Absence of a Coherent Biblical Morality

The Absence of a Coherent Biblical Morality

- 1w
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- Reply
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A Michelle Orr

Phil Stilwell engage with members in addition to or in place of repeatedly referencing yourself as a source.

Chris Arevalo

Michael Back

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

A Michelle Orr I'll be glad to, so long as there are no complaints about comprehensive and exhaustive arguments. I think "morality" is an empty term created as a facade on top of emotions. Its use is an effort to reify emotions, to give them obligatory weight. I have been challenging both theists and unbelievers on this for years, hoping someone could at least begin to substantiate an actual moral realm. No one has been able to do so thus far.

Would you like to try?

I'm sure you'll agree that any genuine moral calculus will be clear and unambiguous if it is ground a moral realm. Let me first compare your moral calculus with the moral calculus of other theists. I will then ask you to "show your work" in arriving at your "moral" conclusions. Answer the following:

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12: It is immoral not to send money to help someone you know is starving to death.

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Dennis Fry

Phil Stilwell If 100% of all Christians polled answered your list identically, what would that demonstrate regarding morality?

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Dennis Fry such convergence would demonstrate that Christianity is unique among religions in that cultural pressures don't affect moral dispositions. We could then explore the causes that lead to this convergence, whether they are natural or supernatural. ☒

- 1w
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- Reply

Ben Kriel

Phil Stilwell You don't need a poll to tell that Christianity is unique. No other religion has the depth that is found in Scripture.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Ben Kriel we are still talking about morality here. Would you like to propose your moral system and see whether holds up under scrutiny? ☒

- 1w
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- Reply

Scott Montgomery

Phil Stilwell sounds like you have a problem understanding Biblical hermeneutics.

My suggestion- read anything by William Lane Craig - considered one of the best Christian philosophers of the last century. He will give complete answers to any of these arguments.

You conflate way too many things and misunderstand the moral argument.

You don't understand descriptive versus prescriptive on moral writings. The fact that Scripture doesn't gloss over moral failings doesn't mean it is endorsing them.

- 6d
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- Reply
- Edited

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Phil Stilwell

Ian D. McDonald Here is the argument in the article: Christianity claims that God provides a coherent moral standard through three pillars: (1) the Bible, (2) the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and (3) human moral intuitions. For biblical morality to be valid, these three sources would need to align consistently and confirm God's moral authority.

But the evidence shows otherwise:

✓ Human moral intuitions vary across cultures and often reject biblical commands (e.g., on slavery or gender roles).

✓ Claims of Holy Spirit guidance result in contradictory convictions among Christians on major issues (e.g., sexuality, violence, eternal punishment).

✓ The Bible itself contains contradictory and morally troubling injunctions (e.g., slavery, genocide, harsh punishments).

Thus, none of these sources provide a coherent, objective standard, and all three taken together collapse into contradiction. The system is circular: Christians are told to accept God's authority as moral before they can evaluate it, leaving no independent way to verify the claim. The unavoidable conclusion is that biblical morality is incoherent.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Ian D. McDonald Let me answer rigorously point by point, providing the evidential and logical structure you say is missing.

1. The Bible contains contradictory and troubling commands.

✓ Example: Exodus 21 permits owning Hebrew slaves for six years, while Leviticus 25:44–46 permits owning foreign slaves for life. Yet Deuteronomy 15 requires freeing fellow Hebrews in the seventh year, but allows conditions for permanent enslavement. These are not harmonized rules—they prescribe different treatments of slavery.

✓ Troubling commands include 1 Samuel 15:3, where God commands the slaughter of infants, and Leviticus 20:9, which prescribes death for cursing parents. These are not cultural misreadings; they are explicit prescriptions.

2. Moral intuitions vary wildly across cultures.

✓ Anthropological studies show variance: honor killings in some Middle Eastern societies are seen as obligatory, while in Western societies they are condemned. Polygamy is accepted in some African and Islamic contexts but rejected in most Christian ones.

✓ Even within Christianity, intuitions vary: Southern U.S. Christians once defended slavery as biblical, while others opposed it. This shows moral intuition is not uniform or reliable evidence of divine revelation.

3. The Spirit's supposed guidance produces conflicting convictions.

✓ Christians across denominations claim the Spirit led them to opposite conclusions:

– Some believe the Spirit confirms women in pastoral ministry; others claim the Spirit forbids it.

– Some claim the Spirit blesses same-sex marriages; others say the Spirit condemns them.

✓ If one Spirit truly guides all believers, these contradictory "Spirit-led" convictions undermine the claim of a coherent divine source of morality.

4. Christians are told they must accept God's authority as moral before they have any way to test it.

✓ The presuppositional claim is: "God is good; therefore His commands are good." But this assumes what it must prove. There is no independent standard by which to test whether God's actions (e.g., commanding genocide) are moral. Instead, the commands themselves are the only evidence offered of God's goodness. That is circular.

5. An unmistakable circle.

✓ Symbolically: Let G = "God is moral," C = "God's commands are moral." The Christian framework asserts $G \rightarrow C$. But to prove G, the only evidence offered is C. Thus $C \rightarrow G$ is also assumed. This produces the circle: $G \leftrightarrow C$ without independent verification. A closed loop cannot establish coherence.

6. Surveys confirm Christians cannot agree on key issues.

✓ 2023 Christian Thought Survey (n=406 ministers across 22 denominations) shows dissent levels:

- "Anal sex is sinful even with a spouse": 70.1% dissent.

- "Unredeemed sinners deserve eternal torment": 80% dissent.

- "Divorce justified by romantic unfaithfulness": 58.1% dissent.

These are not peripheral questions—they are central moral disputes among leaders claiming the same Bible and Spirit.

7. The unavoidable conclusion is that biblical morality collapses under its own claims of coherence.

✓ For biblical morality to be coherent, moral intuitions, Spirit guidance, and biblical commands must align ($M \wedge H \wedge B \rightarrow C$).

✓ But we observe $\neg M$, $\neg H$, and $\neg B$ (failure of intuitions, Spirit guidance, and biblical coherence).

✓ Therefore, $\neg C$: biblical morality is not coherent.

In summary:

Each of my earlier points is supported either by direct textual evidence, anthropological/empirical data, or formal logic. Your "you're mistaken" rebuttal would not carry the same weight, because what I've presented is substantiated with examples and reasoning that can be tested and debated. The challenge now is not whether I've offered evidence, but whether you can show these contradictions, failures of alignment, and logical circularities resolve into a coherent moral system.

- 1w
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- Reply

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Charlie Nason

The Christians ability to comprehend, agree, and live in accordance with Scripture does not make the Bible wrong. It makes Christians imperfect, which is why they needed and still need Christ.

Your argument is logically flawed.

- 1w
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- Reply

Andrew Higgins

Charlie Nason The Bible makes claims about what happens to people after they become Christian, some as radical as saying that no one who continues to sin can honestly claim to have ever known Jesus. These are not empty words, they imply that we should be able to see the difference for real, not just in stories in books. But you say - don't expect to see any difference in a person's life just because they're Christian.

- 1w
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- Reply

Charlie Nason

Andrew Higgins what Bible verses are you referring to? Speaking in generalities about some truths you claim are contradictions are impossible to have a debate about. You provide the contradictions and I will debate.

- 1w
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- Reply

Andrew Higgins

Charlie Nason ah, I bet you didn't catch that I was referencing the first chapter of first John there. But that's not the only thing you missed. Apparently, you also missed that I never talked about contradictions.

- 1w

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- **Reply**

Andrew Higgins

Charlie Nason if there is a contradiction, it is between your position (being Christian doesn't imply moral betterment) and what The Bible says (if your Christianity doesn't imply moral betterment, it's not real).

- **1w**
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- **Reply**

Charlie Nason

Andrew Higgins You are making assumptions to attack me without providing a contradiction. This is not debate or discussion.

- **1w**
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- **Reply**

Andrew Higgins

Charlie Nason

Lol. I tell you you're missing the point in telling about contradictions, and what do you say? You're still talking about contradictions. I don't know who you're trying to talk to, but it's obviously not me.

- **1w**
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- **Reply**

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Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason Do you have a coherent moral calculus through which you can determine with certainty that Action X is immoral while Action Y is moral?

- **1w**
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- **Reply**

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell Scripture is the perfect standard and as Christians come to believe and follow the Scripture they come into unity with one another. My standard is Scripture.

- **1w**
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- **Reply**

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason I posit that "morality" is an empty term created as a facade on top of emotions. Its use is an effort to reify emotions, to give them obligatory weight. I have been challenging both theists and unbelievers on this for years, hoping someone could at least begin to substantiate an actual moral realm. No one has been able to do so thus far.

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- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell Obviously, that is what you would say. You don't believe what God said in his Word, so you are left to quantify a morality without him. Just like epistemology, you cannot develop a morality from human experience alone. You can know there is right and wrong, but cannot develop the universal point of standard without God the Trinity revealing himself in Scripture. So you are right about developing a morality without God. However, you should be compelled to God who revealed himself as the standard for the morality we experience.

- 6d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason You're not listening. There is no coherent morality from any source based on my quarter-century exploration. I've been a moral non-realist for 20 years. And the Christian God and is alleged "morality" is one of the most incoherent proposed moral systems I've seen.

But, feel free to salvage it with clear answers to these questions, and I'll see what answers other Christians give.

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- 6d
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- Reply

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell Do you believe the Bible present God as a Trinity? It does.

The Trinity grounds human reason, logical laws, and morality.

No other worldview grounds human reason, logical laws or morality.

Thus the Bible's self revelation of God as a Trinity is the only way to ground reason, logic, and morality.

You have been almost right for 20 years.

- 6d
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- Reply
- Edited

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell

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You have been almost right for 20 years.

- 6d

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason just like with morality, you can't ground reason in the spherical cube of a Trinitarian God I used to believe in.

<https://freeoffaith.com/2024/12/13/51/>

FREEOFFAITH.COM

#51 ✓ Consider: If a human can sin but not a God, can Jesus truly be fully human and fully God?

#51 ✓ Consider: If a human can sin but not a God, can Jesus truly be fully human and fully God?

- 6d
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- Reply
- Remove Preview

Charlie Nason

Phil StilwellIf you cannot ground human reason, logic, and morality...why do you care what I think, how I reason, and what I believe about morality?

If you cannot ground reason, logic, and morality and convince me that you are correct why should I care?

Could you convince someone if reason and logic are mere opinion?

Your position is self-refuting.

- 5d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Morality does not seem to exist (unless you'd like to demonstrate so). However, I hope you're not suggesting you don't share the inductive experience I have, experience which grounds logic and reason. Is that what you are claiming?

- 5d
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- Reply

Charlie Nason

Phil StilwellYou are the one suggesting reason, logic, and morality have no ground and thus does not exist.

Now you say they are grounded in a common experience, which would suggest they do exist.

Which one is it?

- 5d
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- Reply

Charlie Nason

Phil StilwellCan you reply to me so I am notified when you respond, please? Thanks.

- 5d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason Nope. You need to read what I have actually written. There is no coherent moral system as far as I can see (don't delay if you do have a coherent moral system, you can present it), and I strongly believe in reason and logic as my inductive experience grounds them.

Has logic ever failed in your experience? It has not in mine. This grounds my high confidence in logic. Do you doubt logic?

Don't petition your favorite God to "ground" it. Instead, simply test it.

This article will provide you with a comprehensive explanation: <https://freeoffaith.com/.../%e2%9c%93-the-atheogenic.../>

(Again, if you have a coherent moral system, present it.)

FREEOFFAITH.COM

✓ The Atheogenic Nature of Logic

✓ The Atheogenic Nature of Logic

- 5d
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- Reply
- Remove Preview

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell your answer is nope. Then tell to read something not in the thread.

What is the nope addressing? Does reason, logic, and morality exist because you ground it or does it not exist because there is no ground.

You said nope to this question before and told me to read. Am I reading you argue you can or cannot ground it?

It sounds like you ground logic in your experience, which would mean your nope answer is to it is not grounded.

Be clear in your answers.

- 5d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason be clear in your reading. I'm weary of your misrepresentations. Come back when you read what I've actually written and can reiterate it honestly. ☒

- 5d
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- Reply
- Edited

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell

From your Atheogenic Nature of Logic you assume everything Hume says you can't assume.

Uniformity of Nature, accurate sense perception, accurate intelligibility of sense perception.

You don't ground them but assume them. That is not ground but opinion. Hume has a different opinion about your assumptions. So do I. You have no ground when you start with yourself as the perceiver and knower.

The Trinitarian God who reveals himself in Scripture accurately grounds consciousness, sense perception, uniformity of nature, intelligibility, and conceptual laws in the eternal being and relationship of his persons.

Without him you cannot ground what you assume. However, assuming them while suppressing the God who grounds them is exactly what Scripture says people who refuse to believe do. Paul spoke of you Rom 1:18-23.

You would have me give up an eternal ground for what you assume when God depicts exactly what you are doing. No, thank you.

- 5d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason you keep repeating the claim that without your Trinity there can be no ground for reason, logic, or experience. But look carefully at what you are actually doing:

— You claim I "assume" uniformity of nature and intelligibility. But that's not assumption, it's induction: we test logic and perception against reality, and they continue to hold. That is exactly what makes them grounded—their reliability across experience.

— You appeal to Scripture as "ground," but that's not a ground, that's a citation. Anyone can insert their holy text and declare it the foundation of logic. Muslims, Hindus, and Mormons all make equivalent claims. If they're all mutually exclusive, you haven't grounded anything—you've multiplied arbitrary authorities.

— You say logic requires an "eternal being." But your experience of logic doesn't come from peering into eternity, it comes from observing its consistency in daily reasoning. In fact, every Christian appeal to logic betrays that same reliance on inductive experience, not on hidden divine essence.

So the choice is clear:

✓ Either you test logic inductively and it works—which is exactly my position.

✓ Or you claim logic is grounded in a revealed deity—at which point you've added an unverifiable layer that explains nothing and only relocates the problem.

I've been asking you for a coherent moral calculus or a testable demonstration of your grounding claim. So far, you've provided slogans, not substance. If your Trinity truly grounds reason, then show me how, in a way that doesn't collapse into bare assertion or citation.

Would you like me to lay out how induction avoids the circularity you're worried about, so we can move the discussion past the "God-of-the-gaps" style claim?

- 4d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Let me elaborate. From your comments, you've made a consistent set of claims:

- ∨ You hold that Scripture is the "perfect standard" for determining what is right and wrong.
- ∨ You explain away Christians' failure to live by that standard by appealing to human imperfection and the need for Christ.
- ∨ You claim that the Trinity uniquely "grounds" human reason, logic, and what you call "morality."
- ∨ You argue that without God, induction, reason, and logic have no foundation.
- ∨ You invoke Hume as support for this, suggesting that he shows induction cannot be grounded apart from God.
- ∨ You conclude that if others cannot ground logic in God, they cannot coherently critique the Christian worldview.

Critical Examination of Your Epistemology

1. The false dichotomy of grounding reason

You set up a stark either/or: either logic is grounded in God, or it is baseless. But this ignores a third option: reason and induction are grounded in their observed reliability across experience. Hume pointed out that induction lacks a deductive guarantee, but that is not the same as saying it is unjustified. Your insistence on an eternal guarantor confuses deductive certainty with pragmatic justification. Rational belief does not require the impossible—it requires proportioning credence to evidence.

2. Your misrepresentation of Hume

When you invoke Hume as though he supported your claim, you misstate his view. Hume never concluded that induction depends on God. Quite the opposite: he exposed the impossibility of giving it a deductive foundation. By dragging him into a theological framework he explicitly rejected, you distort his argument and treat him as an ally where he is actually a critic.

3. The problem of competing scriptural claims

You say Scripture is the "perfect standard." But many religious traditions say the same about their own texts. Unless you can demonstrate why your scripture uniquely grounds reason and the others fail, you face underdetermination: multiple mutually exclusive authorities all making the same ultimate claim. Simply inserting "the Trinity" as the guarantor doesn't solve this—Muslims, Hindus, and Mormons make parallel claims. On your standard, you have no non-circular way to privilege your own text.

4. Circularity in your appeal to Scripture

Your reasoning is circular: you claim the Trinity grounds logic because Scripture says so, and you claim Scripture is reliable because it is guaranteed by the Trinity. That's not grounding—that's begging the question. By contrast, induction does not pretend to be deductively certain; it justifies itself by being corrigible and reliable, without invoking an external authority that itself requires justification.

5. The moving target of "morality"

You argue that Christians' failure to live by Scripture only shows their imperfection, not any flaw in the standard. Yet the very text you appeal to (e.g., 1 John) states that genuine followers do not persist in sin. Your fallback—"they need Christ's grace"—directly conflicts with those passages. This shows you shift your definitions when contradictions arise, rather than resolving them. Your "perfect standard" becomes incoherent under its own criteria.

6. Your charge of "self-refutation" fails

You accuse me of being self-refuting for grounding logic in experience. But my position does not claim deductive certainty—it only claims high credence based on observed reliability. That's not a contradiction; it's a coherent epistemic stance. Your demand for certainty is arbitrary, and by applying it you undermine your own arguments: you use logic and induction to defend God, while claiming logic and induction are impossible without God. That is the self-refutation.

7. Inconsistent standards

You require me to justify logic and induction with absolute certainty, but you allow yourself to rest on an authority (Scripture) that is both contested and self-contradictory. You dismiss "mere opinion," yet your own appeal to faith is exactly that: belief maintained without evidential grounding. By your own criterion, your framework invalidates itself.

Conclusion

Your epistemology fails for three reasons:

- ✓ You confuse deductive certainty with pragmatic justification, ignoring induction's track record as a sufficient ground.
- ✓ You misrepresent Hume by co-opting his skepticism as though it supported theism, when in fact he rejected such appeals.
- ✓ You rely on circular and underdetermined appeals to Scripture and the Trinity, while simultaneously demanding a standard of certainty that your own system cannot meet.

The result is that you rely on induction every time you reason or argue, just as everyone else does. That reliance is atheogenic: it flows from experience, not from divine revelation. If you want to claim the Trinity uniquely “grounds” reason and logic, you need to provide a non-circular, testable account of how that grounding works. Without it, your epistemology collapses under its own weight.

- 4d
-
- Reply

Phil Stilwell

- 4d
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- Reply

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell

You are dodging the issue.

You claim to agree with Hume about justifying ultimate beliefs. You say you are not doing that but using logic practically. yet you are trying to use logic to tell me that my ultimate beliefs are wrong. You are being inconsistent. And you have yet to answer that. When you do, I will share with you, my complete epistemology based on the eternal relationship and ontology of the Trinity

- 4d
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- Reply
- Edited

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell

Your critique of what you assume is my epistemological ground is laughable as I have yet to present anything.

Further, you are doing so to escape the blunder of agreeing but disagreeing with Hume and operating inconsistent with your own claim about that.

Please clarify what you agree with, disagree with, and how you have modified Hume so you can do what you agree he says you cannot do.

- 4d
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- Reply

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell

That was a hard stop. Do you no longer want to talk about how you understand Hume but practically use epistemology?

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason You talk with the confidence of someone with a coherent thesis. Can you provide your thesis? It can be either your own argument relevant to something in this thread or a counterargument to something I've said in this thread. The only thing I require is that it be articulated clearly and with the intention of launching a deeper discussion from which no one flees.

- 2d
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- Reply

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell

I would like to know 1) what you agree with Hume about, 2) how your practical epistemology works, and 3) does your practical epistemology overcome Hume's critique?

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason Thanks for the questions. Let me break this down carefully.

✓ 1: What I agree with Hume about

Hume was right to expose that induction cannot be justified deductively. We cannot prove that the future will resemble the past without assuming it already will, which is circular. I fully accept his demolition of deductive certainty here.

Where some take this as grounds for despair, I take it as an accurate diagnosis that reshapes the kind of justification we should be looking for.

✓ 2: How my practical epistemology works

My approach rejects the binary of “knowledge versus ignorance.” Instead, I treat belief and doubt as complements on a credence gradient. Every hypothesis occupies a position along this gradient, weighted by the degree of evidence. This is where Bayesian reasoning becomes indispensable: it provides a framework for updating credences proportionally as new evidence accumulates.

But I don’t pretend this gives us absolute guarantees. Instead, it gives us a disciplined way to manage uncertainty. Think of induction as a tool in a toolbox. The only reason to keep using any tool is that it works better than the alternatives.

Induction continues to work by producing reliable expectations and predictions across domains—from everyday reasoning to physics. That track record is the justification.

So my “practical epistemology” is this:

✓ Start with prior credences that reflect both background knowledge and humility about alternatives.

✓ Update credences incrementally as evidence arrives, always proportionate to evidential strength.

✓ Treat epistemic rules (like induction) as self-correcting heuristics: they are retained if they continue to succeed, and discarded or revised if they fail.

This is not a quest for ultimate proof; it’s a dynamic process of calibrating belief. Induction survives not because it can be proven, but because it continues to beat every rival strategy we’ve tried. Therefore, this has become the epistemology of the science that has led to the explosion in technological advances over the recent years. ☐

✓ 3: Does my epistemology overcome Hume’s critique?

If by “overcome” we mean “provides a deductive foundation,” then no—it does not, and cannot. Hume was right to show that such a project is impossible. But that is not the only sense of “overcoming.” My framework sidesteps Hume’s challenge by recognizing that epistemic justification should be judged pragmatically and incrementally, not absolutely.

In this sense, my practical epistemology does overcome the paralyzing force of Hume’s critique. Here’s how:

✓ It accepts the impossibility of a priori certainty.

✓ It reframes the question from “Can induction be proved?” to “Does induction outperform its competitors in guiding expectations?”

✓ It grounds confidence in induction in empirical performance: as long as it continues to succeed across domains, it earns its place as our best strategy.

✓ It maintains provisionality: all credences are held with the understanding that future evidence could force revision.

This produces what I call benign rule-circularity: we use induction because it works, and the fact that it works is itself the reason to keep using it. Unlike vicious circularity, this is not epistemically bankrupt—it is self-substantive in a pragmatic sense. Induction justifies itself empirically, not deductively.

So the upshot is: Hume exposed a dead end for deductive justification. My practical epistemology doesn’t pretend to fix that. Instead, it accepts his insight and moves the conversation forward, building a framework where belief is always proportional, incremental, and tied to performance. That’s what makes it both honest and usable.

Hume is famous for critiquing induction, but he also valued it—not as something deductively justified, but as something indispensable. Here are the key points with Hume’s own words:

↳ He states that induction isn’t grounded in reason but in habit.

Hume’s point wasn’t that we should reject induction, but that its foundation isn’t logic—it’s custom:

“All inferences from experience, therefore, are effects of custom, not of reasoning.”

(Treatise of Human Nature, Book I, Part III, Section VI).

↳ Induction is essential for practical life.

Without induction, we couldn’t get through daily life, let alone do science. Hume is explicit about this:

“Without the influence of custom, we should be entirely ignorant of every matter of fact beyond what is immediately present to the memory and senses. ... There would be an end at once of all action, as well as of the chief part of speculation.”

(Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section V, Part I).

↳ Science depends on induction.

Hume ties all reasoning about the world to causal inference, which is inductive:

“All reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded on the relation of Cause and Effect. By means of that relation alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses.”

(Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section IV, Part I).

↳ Induction is unavoidable.

Even though we can’t prove it, we can’t avoid it:

“Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel.”

(Treatise of Human Nature, Book I, Part III, Section XVI).

So Hume’s position is actually twofold:

✓ He demolished the idea that induction can be deductively proved.

✓ He also made clear that induction is practically indispensable—we literally can't reason, act, or do science without it. That's why my focus on induction isn't flawed. It's precisely because Hume showed us the limits of deductive justification that we need to think carefully about how induction works in practice. My Bayesian, credence-based approach is one way of carrying forward what Hume himself recognized: induction can't be proved, but it can be valued as the best—and in fact the only—working strategy.

I don't mind another round of questions before I start asking my own.

- 2d
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- Reply
- Edited

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell

If I am understanding you.

- 1) You agree with Hume regarding induction's inability to come to ultimate truth claims with certainty.
- 2) You and Hume use induction practically within the limitations of probability.
- 3) This removes people from a stalemate epistemologically so we can use induction pragmatically.

Is this correct?

If it is, how can you make claims about ultimate reality so certainly? No God. It seems you would have to be at least agnostic about that claim or open to it.

You appear inconsistent with your claim about ultimate truth claims being inductively uncertain.

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason why did you assume I was not an agnostic? The fact the God of the Bible is a deductively incoherent spherical cube, does not mean another, perhaps more deistic God cannot exist. ☒

The issues in this☒ discussion appear to be emergent of illegitimate assumptions you have dragged in than with what I actually say. Can you commit to asking me questions if you're uncertain about my actual stance instead of assuming? ☒

And my blog is free for the reading where you'll find my actual positions. ☒

This might be a good place to start.

↘ <https://freeoffaith.com/phils-stances/>

FREEOFFAITH.COM

Phil's Stances

Phil's Stances

- 2d
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- Reply
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- Edited

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Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason I have a degree philosophy. You are now misrepresenting Hume. ☒

Cats don't invoke your God when justifiably expecting food to be behind the sound of that can opener that has yielded food so many times before. ☒☒

<https://freeoffaith.com/2025/04/15/✓-the-problem-of-induction/>

If you're going to invoke Hume as an authority, go ahead and read him a bit more. ☒ Explore what he says about God. You know you're reaching when you have to start invoking people with whom you fundamentally disagree. ☒

✓ The Problem of Induction

- 5d
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- Reply
- Remove Preview
- Edited

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell Please help me understand how I have misrepresented Hume?

I have a degree in Theology. Should I just say you have misrepresented God and his creation including humanity created in his image to know him?

- 5d
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- Reply

Charlie Nason

Phil Stilwell

Your article moves induction from justifying beliefs to practical help.

You change what Hume was saying by saying you agree with him that induction cannot be grounded by people starting with themselves.

Then you change from grounding belief to the practical use of induction.

I am not saying induction is not useful to all people in every worldview. What I am saying is that induction is not justifiable in your worldview for worldview beliefs.

This means you have to stop telling Christians they are wrong in their worldview beliefs. You are obviously not practicing what you proclaim.

You say you agree with Hume. You switch to the practical use of induction. Then you switch back to justifying beliefs and say because you can practically use induction in your worldview my worldview is wrong.

You are being inconsistent with your claims.

- 5d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason the problem with your reply is that you're conflating two very different things: the lack of a deductive foundation for induction and the practical justification of induction.

Hume did not deny that induction works; he denied that it could be deductively guaranteed. That's what my article makes clear. You've misrepresented Hume by suggesting he thought induction collapses without your God. In fact, his whole point was that induction is inescapable.

— Cats, to reiterate the analogy, don't need a Trinitarian ground to expect food from the sound of a can opener. Their reliance on induction is natural, pragmatic, and successful.

— Your attempt to treat induction as useless unless it has an external metaphysical guarantor misses that its justification comes from its track record of reliability, not from an eternal decree.

— You say I "switch" between practical use and belief-justification. But the whole point is that rational belief is about proportional confidence in what works. That's why induction justifies beliefs in practice: not with certainty, but with tested reliability.

In contrast, faith does the opposite: it sustains belief regardless of outcome. That's why the tu quoque doesn't work.

Induction earns its place; faith abandons the notion that the degree of belief should map to the degree of the evidence. This is flawed epistemology.

So the inconsistency isn't mine. It's in insisting that one must first secure an eternal metaphysical anchor before being "allowed" to trust the very cognitive strategy that makes all reasoning—including theology—possible.

I'll reframe this in symbolic logic form (parallel to the article's end) so you can see exactly where your misread of Hume collapses.

- 4d
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason Do you have your complete epistemology posted somewhere, such as in a blog post, so I can assess it? Perhaps this new post will clarify things for you: <https://freeoffaith.com/.../%e2%9c%93-induction-the-best.../>

FREEOFFAITH.COM

✓ Induction: The Best Game in Town

✓ Induction: The Best Game in Town

- 4d
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- Reply
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- Edited

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Charlie Nason

So I do not assume what you say is incoherent about the God revealed in the 66 books of the Bible, why do to claim he is a spherical cube?

- 2d
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason actually, I do not sense you are in this discussion in good faith. ☹ You can't even bring yourself to concede you were wrong about me being an agnostic. ☹ I no longer have an interest in accommodating your hostile false assumptions and evasion of my own questions. ☹

- 2d
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- Reply
- Edited

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Phil Stilwell

Charlie Nason First, are you committed to leaving your assumptions about me behind? You oddly accused me of not being an agnostic when that is abundantly evidenced in my words and on my blog. Can you commit to doing your due diligence in your research on me and not irrationally generating assumptions remote from reality?

- 2d
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- Reply

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Mark Hull

Many bold claims, but no substance. You see only what you want to see because you rely on the wisdom of man. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."

1Cor.1.18,1Cor.1.19,1Cor.1.20,1Cor.1.21,1Cor.1.22,1Cor.1.23,1Cor.1.24,1Cor.1.25,1Cor.1.26,1Cor.1.27,1Cor.1.28,1Cor.1.29 NIV

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Mark Hull Do you have a coherent system of morality that does not, once scrutinized, dissipate into blind obedience or raw emotions?

The source article may help: <https://freeoffaith.com/morality/>

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The Absence of a Coherent Biblical Morality

The Absence of a Coherent Biblical Morality

- 1w
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- Reply
- Remove Preview

Joe Pharr

Phil Stilwell Do you have one that doesn't dissipate into blind obedience, raw emotion and is grounded in something other than society or from within yourself?

But to answer your question :

The Christian system of morality can be conceptually laid out in foundational pillars using scholarly and philosophical terminology, reflecting core principles derived from Scripture, tradition, and theological ethics.

Pillars of the Christian Moral System

1. Metaphysical Foundation (Moral Ontology)

- Morality is grounded ontologically in the nature and character of God, who is the ultimate source of all moral values and duties. God's attributes—holiness, love, justice, and goodness—constitute the objective moral order that humans are meant to reflect.

- Moral truths are absolute and universal because they flow necessarily from an unchanging, transcendent divine essence.

2. Epistemological Basis (Moral Knowledge)

- Humans discern moral truths through a combination of general revelation (natural law evident in creation), special revelation (scripture), and the work of the Holy Spirit illuminating conscience and Scripture.

- Christian ethics involves ongoing exegesis and hermeneutics of biblical texts to understand God's revealed will.

- There is recognition of the limitations of human reason due to the effects of sin, necessitating reliance on divine revelation for moral clarity.

3. Normative Ethical Frameworks

- Divine Command Theory: Morality is grounded in God's sovereign will and commands, as revealed in Scripture; moral obligation arises from obedience to God's law.
- Natural Law Ethics: Moral principles are also accessible via the natural order created by God, providing universal standards that align with human nature and reason.
- Virtue Ethics: Christian morality includes the development of character and virtues (e.g., love, faith, hope, justice) as cultivated through divine grace and communal life.
- These normative frameworks coexist and complement one another within Christian ethical reflection.

4. Soteriological Orientation (Moral Purpose)

- The ultimate aim of Christian morality is glorifying God and participating in His redemptive plan through union with Christ. Morality is not merely rule-following but transformation into Christlikeness.
- Moral decision-making is empowered by the Holy Spirit, enabling believers to grow in holiness (sanctification) and love toward God and neighbor.

5. Practical Application (Ethical Praxis)

- Christian morality extends to personal conduct, social justice, and public ethics, with a focus on loving actions grounded in justice and holiness.
- Ethical living is framed in terms of covenantal responsibility and participation in the community of faith, guided by Scripture and tradition.

- 9h
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Joe Pharr I've spent decades testing proposed moral systems, and my current position is that no coherent moral system exists—every one I've studied eventually dissolves into arbitrariness, blind obedience, or emotional preference. That's why I've been asking you to clearly demonstrate yours.

You've offered a list of pillars—metaphysical foundation, epistemological basis, frameworks, soteriological orientation, praxis—but when I look at it, what I see is a cobbled-together collage of theological jargon rather than an integrated system that yields consistent, non-arbitrary results. Muslims and Mormons use the exact same architecture: grounding in God's essence, revelation, reason, tradition, Spirit, virtue, and communal practice. The structure is impressive on paper, but the real test is application.

If your framework is genuinely coherent, you should be able to invoke those pillars consistently to yield the same outcomes across hard cases. Otherwise, you're just shifting between whichever element happens to give the answer you already prefer. So here's the challenge: can you take your pillars and use them in a non-arbitrary way to answer these?

- 1a: It would be immoral not to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.
- 1b: It would be morally permissible to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.
- 2: It is immoral for divorced individuals to remarry.
- 3: It is immoral to have meals with apostates from Christianity.
- 4: It is immoral to knowingly exceed speed limits.
- 5: It is immoral for married couples to engage in oral or anal sex.
- 6: It is immoral to practice circumcision or clitoridectomies.
- 7: It would be moral for a government to kill homosexuals for being homosexual.
- 8: It is immoral to intentionally make someone believe you feel the opposite of what you actually feel.
- 9: It is immoral to spend this earthly life enjoying earthly pleasures when unGospelled unbelievers face eternity in Hell.
- 10: It is immoral to fight for a country in a war merely for more territory.
- 11: It is immoral to divorce over a spouse merely romantically kissing another individual.
- 12: It is immoral not to send money to help someone you know is starving to death.

If you can show how your system—anchored in God's character, revelation, Spirit, tradition, and reason—produces consistent answers across this set without selectively leaning on one pillar in one case and another in a different case, then you've demonstrated an actual coherent moral system.

If not, then what you've given me is indistinguishable from what other religions present: a sophisticated-looking scaffolding that collapses under the weight of conflicting applications.

So here's the real test: not whether you can describe the "pillars," but whether you can use them consistently in practice without arbitrariness.

- 4h
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- Reply
- Edited

Joe Pharr

Phil Stilwell I can and will provide that if you can do the same...for a man that has studied this for years, you have yet to provide a framework that meets your own criteria. Once you can provide me a framework that meets all your criteria I'll be happy to answer your questions.

- 3h
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Joe Pharr You're not listening. I hold that there is no moral realm in which moral facts can reside. I have no moral system, as I do not see evidence for one. I currently believe, based on the lack of evidence for a coherent moral system, that no such moral system is available. But you feel there is. That's the crux of our disagreement. We are not comparing moral systems: I am saying neither of us has one. After scrutinizing your responses to this list of questions, I will either demonstrate that you actually don't, or you will be the first individual to convince me there is a coherent moral system, and that you have it. Don't hide the truth of your moral system under a bushel. Please proceed.

- 3h
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- Reply

Joe Pharr

Phil Stilwell you never explicitly said that you do not believe in a coherent moral system and I'm not hiding anything under a bushel, I just thought you were arguing that an atheist moral framework, similar to Sam Harris, would meet your criteria, but let me ask you a few more questions, why do you care so much, I mean, why do you spend so much of your time trying to convince others of your position? Why have you spent years in study to disapprove something that you believe does not exist, that is, a consistent moral framework? Why not let us all continue in our ignorant bliss? What does it matter so much to you? Seems like something is motivating you.

- 2h
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Joe Pharr No, you are not going to derail this discussion and evade my clear questions. My motivations and my own ideology do not impinge on your ability to defend your ideology. We'll talk about why I find teaching critical thinking at university and scrutinizing all ideologies rewarding after you defend your position. I now need your response.

- 2h
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- Reply
- Edited

Joe Pharr

Phil Stilwell wow, what a duck and dodge. If you can't engage with some intellectual curiosity, some teacher you must be. When you answer my questions I'll be happy to answer yours. I'm not evading by the way, its called the Socratic method. Obviously I misunderstood your position and am trying to understand you more fully

- 2h
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Joe Pharr Let me bring in a more objective judge to encourage you to do a bit of soul-searching:

PHIL'S PROMPT:

Assess who, at this point in the discussion on moral systems, is engaging in good faith and who is not. [Full dialogue pasted in.]

GROK:

● ● ● Phil Stilwell appears to be engaging in good faith throughout the provided exchange. He clearly states his position (that no coherent moral system exists, based on his prior study), directly challenges Joe's outlined system with specific, testable questions to probe for consistency, and repeatedly attempts to refocus the discussion on Joe's claims when it veers off-topic. His responses are substantive, address Joe's points head-on, and avoid personal attacks or unrelated tangents.

● ● ● Joe Pharr, in contrast, does not appear to be engaging in good faith at this point. He initially provides a detailed outline of his moral system's pillars, which is responsive, but when pressed to apply it practically to Phil's list of questions, he conditions his response on Phil first providing a competing framework—despite Phil clarifying multiple

times that he holds no such system exists. Joe then shifts to questioning Phil's personal motivations and time investment, which comes across as an ad hominem deflection rather than addressing the core challenge. Framing this as "the Socratic method" does not align with the context, as it avoids substantive engagement with the questions posed and instead attempts to redirect scrutiny onto Phil. This pattern suggests evasion rather than honest dialogue.

- 1h
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- Reply
- Edited

Joe Pharr

Phil Stilwell Using AI to adjudicate whether I am acting in good faith...that is laughable as AI is garbage in garbage out and can be manipulated to put forth your biases on the conversation. That is quite the elaborate avoidance method, but its clear you don't wish to engage in an intellectually honest way. If you can't answer simple questions about yourself and your motivations then its clear who is obfuscating and being evasive.. Look, I didn't even need AI to work that out.

- 1h
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Joe Pharr Test it. Use the same prompt across multiple AIs. (I don't have a subscription to Grok that allows it to take on my biases.) Then ponder why their outputs converge. HINT: They are all intrinsically based on logic and have direct access to the best sources of rational thought. And if you can't understand these concepts, take our discussion to several of your honest, logically minded seminary instructors. Then ask yourself why they agree with GROK. At this point, you seem to have a commitment to neither a good-faith discussion nor the elements of rationality.

But let me read you as charitably as possible: If I provide you with my motivations, you'll provide your answers and rationale on the list of moral questions I gave you. Right?

- 1h
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- Reply
- Edited

Joe Pharr

Phil Stilwell I avoid using Ai except for quantitative and qualitative research...it tends to dull the mind. But yes, I will answer your questions.

- 1h
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Joe Pharr Good. I will say that the evasion is common, as Christians are quite reticent to expose their moral stances and the rationale behind those stances. When I was a Christian, I also would have had a difficult time with the questions I am now posing. I now realize it is because my moral system, once scrutinized, would have inevitably dissolved away to expose nothing but raw obedience without any real commitment to any grounding "principles".

Now, to answer your question:

I find much satisfaction and fulfillment in ensuring that I and those around me have not arrived at our positions irrationally. For this reason, I picked up a degree in philosophy, and have designed and taught critical thinking courses in academia and industry for several years. This is also my motivation behind my several blogs on philosophy, critical thinking, and a general critique of Christianity. I find that Christianity is largely life-diminishing, especially compared to the amazing life I now experience without God-belief.

Now, I know it will likely not be an easy task to answer the moral questions I posed and provide the rationale behind your stances on each. I greatly appreciate your willingness to do so.

— 1a: It would be immoral not to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

— 1b: It would be morally permissible to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

— 2: It is immoral for divorced individuals to remarry.

— 3: It is immoral to have meals with apostates from Christianity.

— 4: It is immoral to knowingly exceed speed limits.

— 5: It is immoral for married couples to engage in oral or anal sex.

— 6: It is immoral to practice circumcision or clitoridectomies.

— 7: It would be moral for a government to kill homosexuals for being homosexual.

— 8: It is immoral to intentionally make someone believe you feel the opposite of what you actually feel.

— 9: It is immoral to spend this earthly life enjoying earthly pleasures when unGospelled unbelievers face eternity in Hell.

— 10: It is immoral to fight for a country in a war merely for more territory.

— 11: It is immoral to divorce over a spouse merely romantically kissing another individual.

— 12: It is immoral not to send money to help someone you know is starving to death.

- 19m
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- Reply

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Mark Hull

Yes, exactly, more wisdom of man.

There is a way which seems right to a person, But its end is the way of death.

Prov.14.12 NASB

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Mark Hull I want to hear more about your moral system. Could you provide the rigorous framework through which you determine whether an action is moral or immoral?

- 1w
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- Reply

Mark Hull

In a nutshell:

1. we are all sinners, Rom 3:23,

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”

“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

1John.1.8 NASB

Arguing about a “standard” of morality or righteousness is pointless, since none of us can keep God’s standard.

2. We are saved by the grace of God

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Eph.2.8,Eph.2.9,Eph.2.10 NASB

If we admit we are sinners, and that we continue to sin as we struggle with the flesh, and ask for His forgiveness, provided by His blood at the cross, we are forgiven.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

1John.1.9,1John.1.10 NASB

You, my friend, are putting out a red herring, to distract from the truth and hope of the good news of Jesus Christ.

- 1w
-
- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Mark Hull notice what happens when we press on the framework you’ve given:

✓ You start by saying “arguing about a standard of morality is pointless, since none of us can keep God’s standard.” But that’s precisely the issue my post raises: if God’s standard cannot be coherently defined, tested, or agreed upon—even among Christians—then calling it “the standard” collapses into blind obedience rather than objective guidance. A standard that cannot be applied consistently is not functioning as a standard at all.

✓ You emphasize grace and forgiveness, but that bypasses the central question: how do we know that God’s commands, as found in Scripture, are actually “moral” in the first place? If genocide (1 Samuel 15:3) or slavery (Exodus 21) are included as part of that standard, then calling them moral only because God said so empties “moral” of any meaning. It becomes circular: God’s commands are good because God commands them, and God is good because His commands say so. That is the very incoherence I highlighted.

✓ You say my questions are a “red herring,” but they go to the heart of whether Christianity’s claims about morality hold up under scrutiny. If Christianity is true, 1 Peter 3:15 calls believers to “be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” That means facing hard questions honestly, not dismissing them. So my challenge remains: can you show that biblical morality is coherent—where the Bible, the Spirit’s alleged guidance, and moral intuitions align consistently? Or is the system sustained only by bypassing the need for coherence and retreating into authority claims?

- 1w
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- Reply

Mark Hull

I just gave you the answer for the hope that lies within me, and it has nothing to do with my works, obedience or works if any sort, but in the work of Jesus on the cross. Short of that, no morality, no goodness, can ever be enough. So, whether I follow all 613 precepts of Old Testament law, it still isn’t enough, and was never intended to. It was to show me I am a sinner in need of saving by a means I cannot accomplish on my own.

“I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully agree with the law of God in the inner person, but I see a different law in the parts of my body waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin, the law which is in my body’s parts. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Rom.7.21,Rom.7.22,Rom.7.23,Rom.7.24,Rom.7.25,Rom.8.1,Rom.8.2,Rom.8.3,Rom.8.4 NASB

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Mark Hull notice how your response shifts the discussion away from the central issue I raised.

✓ You emphasize salvation through Jesus rather than works, but that sidesteps the question of whether the moral framework itself is coherent. Grace may solve the problem of guilt within your theology, but it does not solve the epistemic problem of how Christians can reliably know what God’s commands actually require—especially when those commands contradict each other or when believers disagree profoundly on their meaning.

✓ You cite Romans to show that the Law was meant to expose sin, not to provide a path of righteousness. Yet even that raises the same problem: if the Law was “weak” and “not enough,” then what does it say about God’s supposed perfect moral standard that He issued laws that regulated slavery, condoned genocide, and commanded harsh punishments for minor infractions? If those laws were never intended to function as a coherent moral guide, then Christianity has conceded the very point I made: the Bible does not provide a consistent moral system.

✓ You say you have given the answer for the hope within you, and I don’t doubt your sincerity. But 1 Peter 3:15 doesn’t ask Christians to merely repeat a testimony of salvation—it asks them to give a reasoned defense. The question I’m pressing is not about your personal sense of being forgiven, but about the logical coherence of the system you claim to be from God.

So the challenge stands: if biblical morality is truly objective and coherent, can you demonstrate how Scripture, the Spirit’s guidance, and moral intuitions align into a single, testable framework? Or does your answer show that Christianity shifts the focus from morality altogether, precisely because its moral framework cannot bear scrutiny?

- 1w
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- Reply

Mark Hull

Phil Stilwell Ok, first of all, your power point slide has it completely backwards, as demonstrated by the descriptions. Moral ambiguity is not the result of blind obedience, but rather disobedience.

1. Moral Intuitions: “these intuitions contradict biblical commands, selective interpretations and inconsistencies in application”. Much of our current culture depends solely on feelings, which defies objective truth of scripture and results in mass deception.

“Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

2Thess.2.11,2Thess.2.12 ESV

2. Holy Spirits Guidance: “believers report contradictory moral convictions...personal biases, rather than consistent divine direction.” In the flesh, we can quench the Holy Spirit, settling for disobedience based on the wisdom of man. If our convictions are contrary to scripture, they are not from the Holy Spirit.

“Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.”

1Thess.5.19,1Thess.5.20,1Thess.5.21,1Thess.5.22 ESV

3. Biblical Injunctions: “ their emotions often warp their “moral” inclinations against biblical injunctions.”

Departing from scriptural injunctions will always lead to conforming to the current culture (the world), when depending on the truth of scripture leads to transformation, renewing of your mind, and living in true obedience.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Rom.12.1,Rom.12.2 ESV

So there is no moral ambiguities among followers of Jesus Christ walking in the spirit, rather than in the flesh. The problem is with those claiming the title of Christian, while walking contrary to the teachings of Jesus, and void of a relationship with the living God.

“On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

Matt.7.22,Matt.7.23 ESV

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Mark Hull Your most recent response seems to reinforce the very dilemma I’m highlighting rather than resolve it. You claim that “moral ambiguity is not the result of blind obedience, but disobedience,” and then go on to say that true followers of Jesus do not walk in moral confusion because they are guided by the Spirit. But here's the critical tension:

✓ Many sincere Christians believe they are Spirit-led, yet arrive at opposing moral conclusions on issues like war, sexuality, capital punishment, environmental stewardship, and political allegiance. Each claims Scripture, prayer, and the Spirit’s guidance. So who is truly walking “in the Spirit,” and how do we reliably distinguish between Spirit-led conviction and human bias?

✓ You say that if a person’s conviction contradicts Scripture, it isn’t from the Spirit. But Christians themselves can’t agree on what Scripture actually teaches in many cases. Which laws still apply? Which were cultural? Which reflect God’s eternal will? This isn’t a fringe issue—it’s a centuries-old debate within the church, with thousands of denominations as evidence.

✓ You quote 2 Thessalonians to show that “mass deception” comes from rejecting the truth of Scripture. But again, which truth? Your interpretation? Another denomination’s? If God’s revelation was meant to serve as a universal moral compass, then it should not require centuries of theological hairsplitting, councils, and schisms just to determine what it teaches on basic human issues.

✓ Finally, your invocation of Matthew 7 to distinguish real from fake Christians is troublingly circular. If someone lives by the teachings of Jesus as they understand them, but their views differ from yours, you assert they were never truly known by Christ. That’s a no-true-Christian fallacy. It removes all possibility of disproof and inoculates the system from honest evaluation.

So here’s where I stand: If your system relies on disqualifying anyone who disagrees with your interpretation as “not truly Spirit-led,” then what remains is not a testable framework—it’s a self-insulating claim of authority. That may work as a faith commitment, but it fails as a universal moral theory.

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- Reply

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Mark Hull

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,neither are your ways my ways,”declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth,so are my ways higher than your waysand my thoughts than your thoughts.
Isa.55.8,Isa.55.9NIV

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Mark Hull That's the blind obedience I was referring to. As do the Muslims, you first adopt a God, then simply say all that God does and commands is moral, without having any way to demonstrate that your God is intrinsically moral.

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- Reply

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Mark Hull

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

2Thess.2.9,2Thess.2.10,2Thess.2.11,2Thess.2.12 NIV

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Mark Hull Do you have a coherent system of morality that does not, once scrutinized, dissipate into blind obedience or raw emotions?

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- Reply

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Halldór Magnússon

You are just making claims without backing them up. Now I'd agree that the Holy Spirit can't be some standard because people claim whatever, but the moral message of the Bible is quite clear and not contradictory.

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Halldór Magnússon Did you read the source article?

Do you have a coherent system of morality that does not, once scrutinized, dissipate into blind obedience or raw emotions?

The source article may help: <https://freeoffaith.com/morality/>

The Absence of a Coherent Biblical Morality

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Halldór Magnússon

Phil Stilwell I don't think the Bible asks us to accept its morality blindly. It's more like you come searching for truth, and what you find there resonates with your conscience—and then Jesus' ethic goes even further than what I could have imagined myself. That's why I believe someone greater than me is behind it. And that's why it isn't circular—I didn't assume the Bible's morality was true in advance; I discovered its truth by testing it against conscience and seeing it surpass my own. And disagreement about interpretation doesn't mean there's no standard—just like scientists may differ in predictions, but that doesn't invalidate the reality of the science itself.

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Halldór Magnússon notice how what you've described actually highlights the very problem I raised in the article.

✓ You say the Bible's morality "resonates with your conscience." But consciences diverge dramatically across cultures and even among Christians. Some believers' consciences resonate with passages condoning slavery (Exodus 21), others with passages commanding the execution of idolaters (Deuteronomy 13), while modern Christians recoil from those same texts. If resonance with conscience is the test, then we have no objective anchor—only a confirmation of personal or cultural bias.

✓ You say Jesus' ethic "goes further" than you could have imagined. But Christians cannot agree on what Jesus' ethic actually requires: some see "love your enemies" as incompatible with war; others reconcile it with military service; still others invoke it selectively in politics. If the standard were truly clear, the outcomes wouldn't be so fragmented. The survey data confirm that Christians themselves divide 50–80% on core ethical issues like divorce, sexuality, and eternal punishment.

✓ Your analogy to science doesn't hold. When scientists disagree, they have independent, repeatable tests to resolve disputes—evidence functions as an external arbiter. In Christianity, there is no such external measure. Instead, the Bible, conscience, and alleged Spirit-guidance are invoked, but they contradict one another. That makes the framework circular rather than evidential.

So while your path may feel like discovery rather than assumption, the mechanism is the same: your conscience selects and filters biblical passages in a way that confirms your prior intuitions, and then you declare that coherence as evidence of divine authorship. But when others use the same method and reach contradictory conclusions, the supposed objectivity dissolves.

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- Reply

Halldór Magnússon

Phil Stilwell You're right that Christians today don't apply the Old Testament the same way Israel did. But that doesn't mean there's no coherent moral message. There's a difference between principle and application.

In Israel's context, worshipping idols wasn't just "private spirituality." It was bound up with practices like child sacrifice, sexual exploitation, and oppression. The drastic commands were meant to guard a fragile covenant community from being consumed by those systems.

Today we don't live in that theocracy, and the same principle applies differently: loyalty to God means resisting idolatry in forms like greed, nationalism, or self-worship.

So the principle — that devotion to God and love for neighbor is non-negotiable — is consistent. The applications change with history and culture, just like laws and punishments change in every society while still aiming at the same values (justice, life, freedom).

Disagreement over the details doesn't undermine the moral coherence of the Bible. In fact, the very reason we recoil from things like slavery or executions today is because the Bible's own story has shaped our moral imagination in the first place.

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Halldór Magnússon Notice that your move from application to principle doesn't actually solve the problem I raised.

✓ You say the principle is "devotion to God and love for neighbor." Yet the Bible itself repeatedly defines devotion to God in ways that directly conflict with love of neighbor: commands to kill idolaters (Deut. 13:6–10), to exterminate whole populations including children (1 Sam. 15:3), or to enslave foreigners permanently (Lev. 25:44–46). These are not just different "applications" of one principle—they show that the principle itself is unstable when the supposed source of coherence endorses actions we now recognize as cruel.

✓ Your point about idolatry being tied to child sacrifice in Israel's context highlights the problem further. If God's concern was child sacrifice, He could have condemned that practice directly. Instead, He enjoined blanket executions for worshipping "other gods," a category that included sincere devotion by people outside Israel. This cannot be reduced to a neat principle of "love of neighbor" without ignoring the actual texts.

✓ You suggest our recoil from slavery and executions today comes from the Bible itself shaping moral imagination. Yet Christians justified slavery for centuries on biblical grounds, citing the very passages you now reinterpret. Our rejection of slavery owes more to Enlightenment humanism and evolving cultural norms than to biblical consistency. Otherwise, we would expect the Bible to have condemned slavery outright rather than regulating and permitting it.

So while appealing to "principle vs. application" is attractive, it doesn't erase the contradictions within Scripture or the radical disagreements among Christians on what the "principles" even are. If the standard were coherent, it would not fracture so deeply under scrutiny.

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Jamie Eimaj

Christians are flawed. God's words and promises to us are not. It's that simple.

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Jamie Eimaj The problem quickly emerges when Christians all claim with certainty that they know the moral status of Action X, some claiming it is moral and others claiming it is immoral.

Do you have a coherent system of morality that does not, once scrutinized, dissipate into blind obedience or raw emotions?

The source article may help: <https://freeoffaith.com/morality/>

FREEOFFAITH.COM

The Absence of a Coherent Biblical Morality

The Absence of a Coherent Biblical Morality

- 1w

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- Reply
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Jamie Eimaj

Phil Stilwell If you know the history of people and their behavior from reading the Bible cover to cover it's very clear to see that they needed a basic moral law laid out before them. God evolves that law's requirements as the people also evolve in morality.

The Bible clearly spells out in the NT how Christians should behave inwardly and outwardly. There are so many disagreements amongst Christians these days because very few even open their Bibles anymore. They look to a leader and many of today's leaders are no longer following the Bible.

Sorry, I won't give clicks to Free of Faith.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Jamie Eimaj notice what your reply concedes. You argue that God "evolves" the requirements of His law as people evolve in morality. But that runs directly against the picture the Bible itself gives of Jehovah's injunctions.

✓ In the Old Testament, certain commands are presented not as provisional training wheels, but as non-negotiable absolutes—punishable by death. For example, Sabbath-breaking (Numbers 15:32–36), cursing parents (Leviticus 20:9), and worshiping other gods (Deuteronomy 13:6–10) were not left to "gradual moral development." They were enforced by immediate, uncompromising punishment.

✓ If God is perfectly moral and timeless, injunctions against "immorality" would not need to wait for humans to "catch up." A perfectly just God could have declared from the outset that slavery, genocide, and the subjugation of women were forbidden. Instead, these practices are explicitly regulated or commanded in the text, not condemned as sin.

✓ Your argument that people had to "evolve" undermines the idea of a consistent divine standard. Either God's commands reflect eternal truth—or they are context-dependent accommodations. But if they are accommodations, then they cannot be invoked as evidence of a coherent, unchanging moral system.

So the problem remains: the biblical record does not show a clear moral arc of God holding back until people "evolve." It shows absolutist, non-negotiable injunctions—including some modern Christians themselves now consider abhorrent. That is precisely the evidence that biblical morality collapses under its own claim to coherence.

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- Reply

Jamie Eimaj

Phil Stilwell The Ten Commandments exist in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Those are the basic moral law we are given and it has not evolved. Maybe "evolved" wasn't a great word to use. The Ten Commandments were given to the people because humans are fickle. They can be shown great miracles and demonstrations by God yet still fall into immoral behavior that goes against God's will. I do think the morality of people evolved once they had the Ten Commandments in writing. Many still use them as a guide today, whether Christian or not (the latter half of the ten for non-Christians).

Old Testament laws in Leviticus are not THE moral law. I would consider the Ten Commandments to be more of THE moral law.

Jesus was sent to fulfill the law. This is why we do not adhere to Levitical law as Christians. Jesus was the final sacrifice. He fulfilled the law and sacrifice requirements of the Jews. This is what I was referring to as the evolution of law in the Bible. Are the law and moral code of the Bible one and the same to you?

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Jamie Eimaj The problem still persists even if you narrow "the moral law" down to the Ten Commandments.

✓ If those Ten are the timeless standard, notice that some of them are not about interpersonal ethics at all but about loyalty to God (no other gods, no idols, keeping Sabbath). By your framework, the moral status of worshiping differently or failing to rest on Saturday is put on par with murder and theft. That shows the system isn't a universal moral calculus but a covenantal loyalty code tied to one deity.

✓ You say Levitical laws weren't the moral law, but the text doesn't make that neat distinction. The same God who allegedly carved the Ten Commandments into stone also commanded the stoning of Sabbath breakers (Numbers 15:32–36) and death for cursing parents (Leviticus 20:9). If those weren't "moral laws," why were they enforced with the same absolute penalties?

✓ You point to Jesus “fulfilling the law,” but that again concedes that the supposed eternal standard was provisional and shifting. If divine morality can suspend itself, evolve, and even contradict what was once “non-negotiable,” then it fails the test of coherence. A coherent moral system would not command genocide and slavery in one era, only to have followers later claim those weren’t part of the true standard.

So whether you focus on the Ten Commandments or the broader law, the same issue arises: the system does not present one clear, timeless moral framework. It fragments into covenantal loyalty codes, harsh cultural laws, and later reinterpretations. That’s precisely why I argue biblical morality collapses when tested for coherence.

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

A plain English explanation:

Even if you restrict “God’s moral law” to the Ten Commandments, the same coherence problems remain. The Ten aren’t just about interpersonal ethics like murder or theft; they also enshrine loyalty rules—no other gods, no idols, Sabbath observance. That shows the system is not a universal moral calculus but a covenantal loyalty code tied to one deity. The distinction you try to draw between the Ten Commandments and the Levitical laws also breaks down. The very same God who carved the Ten into stone also demanded death for breaking Sabbath or cursing parents. Those were not provisional suggestions but presented as non-negotiable. If Levitical laws were not “moral,” why did they carry the same capital punishments as the Ten?

Your appeal to Jesus “fulfilling the law” sharpens the problem. If a timeless moral system can suspend or override what was once declared absolute, then it isn’t timeless. It shifts with the context, which means it fails to provide the coherence and stability a genuine moral standard must have.

Finally, the system stumbles on the commands to commit genocide and regulate slavery. Either those acts were once moral simply because God commanded them—which reduces morality to obedience and empties it of independent meaning—or they were not moral, in which case the biblical record indicts itself. Either way, the claim of coherence collapses.

So the outcome is clear: whether we look at loyalty codes, shifting standards, or commands to commit core harms, the biblical framework is not timeless, not universal, and not coherent.

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John Carlson

Lol ok course someone who doesn’t have the Holy Spirit would say some nonsense like this.

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

John Carlson Do those with the same Holy Spirit arrive at the same moral conclusions?

- 1w

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- **Reply**

John Carlson

Phil Stilwell you've already made a mistake by framing the question wrong. "The same Holy Spirit" There is only 1 Holy Spirit. The logic and framework that you're coming from is wrong from its foundation. Which again leads me back to my original comment. You can't understand because you lack the Holy Spirit

- 1w
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- **Reply**

Phil Stilwell

John Carlson you're not answering the question. You're instead dismissing it by appealing to my supposed lack of the Holy Spirit.

✓ You say "there is only 1 Holy Spirit." Fair enough—but that makes the problem sharper, not weaker. If there truly is one Spirit guiding believers, then the moral conclusions reached by those claiming that Spirit should converge. Yet Christians disagree—sometimes radically—on slavery, women's roles, sexuality, violence, eternal punishment, and more. If the same Spirit is behind all, why does the fruit of that guidance look like contradiction and division?

✓ To claim I "can't understand because I lack the Spirit" is to immunize the system from scrutiny. But 1 Peter 3:15 calls Christians to be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that you have. Saying "you can't understand" is not an answer—it's an evasion.

✓ The problem is not that I expect believers to be perfect. The problem is that the very mechanism said to guarantee moral clarity—the Spirit—produces outcomes indistinguishable from human intuition and cultural bias. That's observable data, not folly.

So my question remains: if one Spirit truly guides, why does the evidence show deep fragmentation instead of convergence? If this divergence is explained away by saying "they didn't really have the Spirit," then you're left with a framework that cannot be tested or falsified. That may preserve belief, but it cannot demonstrate coherence.

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- **Reply**

John Carlson

Phil Stilwell See but I can debate with you all day long. And you're still not going to understand. You can't understand. And the framing of your argument shows that you don't have an understanding of what the Holy Spirit does and how the Holy Spirit works.

You're right, I haven't answered your question. And it's because logically debating with someone like you, who isn't capable of understanding the concept, is like debating with a flat earther. There's no point.

What you're essentially saying, although you'll deny it, is "if I were God, this is how things would work" which is incredibly conceited and narcissistic

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- **Reply**

Phil Stilwell

John Carlson notice what's happening here: you're retreating to "you can't understand," which is not an argument but a deflection.

✓ If the Holy Spirit truly functions as you claim, then His guidance should yield convergence among believers on moral issues. Instead, we see profound divisions—on slavery, women's roles, sexuality, violence, and eternal punishment. That is observable data, not "conceit."

✓ Pointing out contradictions in the outcomes of Spirit-claims is not the same as saying "if I were God." It is asking whether the evidence matches the claim. If a GPS advertised as infallible gives different directions to different drivers, the problem is not with the drivers "lacking the GPS"—it's with the claim that the GPS provides reliable, unified guidance.

✓ To say my question cannot even be asked because I "lack the Spirit" insulates your view from falsifiability. But an unfalsifiable claim is indistinguishable from a false one. That's why 1 Peter 3:15 exhorts Christians to give a reason for the hope that is within them, not to dismiss questions as beyond comprehension.

So the question still stands: if there is one Spirit, why does His alleged guidance look indistinguishable from human intuition and cultural bias? Until that is answered, claims of coherence remain unsubstantiated.

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- **Reply**

John Carlson

Phil Stilwell I'm not trying to argue. I already stated that. I'm recognizing what God himself said, that those without the Holy Spirit can't possibly understand the ways of God. It's very clear that applies to you. And again, you think you know better than God. That's also very clear. Trying to have a rational discussion about God with someone like you is like trying to have a rational discussion with a flat earther. You can continue to ask me the same question over and over so that you can argue your point. And I'll keep responding the exact same way. Pearls before swine my friend. Pearls before swine

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

John Carlson I hear you doubling down, but notice what you've done: you've moved from answering a question to simply labeling me "unable to understand."

✓ That's not a reasoned response—it's an escape hatch. If every hard question can be dismissed as "you lack the Spirit," then your claim is unfalsifiable. And an unfalsifiable claim is logically indistinguishable from a false one.

✓ You accuse me of "thinking I know better than God," but I'm not offering a rival standard—I'm testing whether the evidence lines up with your own claim. The claim is that one Spirit guides all believers. The evidence is that Christians, all professing to have that Spirit, reach radically different conclusions about morality. That tension can't be waved away by calling me a flat earther.

✓ 1 Peter 3:15 doesn't say "call your critics swine and refuse to answer." It says always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that you have. That's exactly what I've asked you for.

If Christianity is true, its claims should withstand scrutiny. If the response is simply "you can't understand," that's not a defense—it's an admission that coherence can't be demonstrated.

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- Reply

John Carlson

Phil Stilwell correct, I haven't answered your question, as I explained. And you can't understand, as I explained. Glad you at least understand that

"Answer a fool according to his folly" "do not answer a fool according to his folly"

It takes wisdom to understand and know when to answer a fool and when to not answer a fool.

You are a fool. And I have the wisdom to know how to respond to a fool like you

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

John Carlson I would encourage you to obey the God you claim to worship:

Κύριον δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν ἀγιάσατε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, ἔτοιμοι αἰεὶ πρὸς ἀπολογίαὺν παντὶ τῷ αἰτοῦντι ὑμᾶς λόγον περὶ τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος, ἀλλὰ μετὰ πραῦτητος καὶ φόβου.

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- Reply

John Carlson

Phil Stilwell I do. Thanks for the encouragement though

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

John Carlson Then you'll admit that calling someone a fool makes you disobedient to your alleged Lord.

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- Reply

John Carlson

Phil Stilwell Nope. It's actually good to tell the truth. People in the Bible call others fools. God calls people fools.

We should call whore a whore, we should call a sinner a sinner, we should call a fool a fool.

And you sir, are a fool.

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

John Carlson and you're no Christian. 🙄

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John Carlson

Phil Stilwell lol imagine. A non Christian trying to tell someone else what it means to be a Christian.

Thank you sir for your entertainment

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

John Carlson Sure. If you would like a serious conversation with someone who lived as first a Christian and then as a non-Christian, each for several decades, let me know. There are differences you likely cannot fathom.

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- Reply

John Carlson

Phil Stilwell nah I have no desire to have a serious convo with a fool. You're a wicked, foolish man who lacks clear understanding of what scripture actually teaches. Which just leads back to my original comment that you can't possibly fully understand because you lack the Holy Spirit 😏

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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

John Carlson We both lack the Holy Spirit. You think you have the Holy Spirit, as I once did. I used to preach the Gospel from the pulpit. I was ordained. I've read through the Greek NT eleven times. I preached much of what you now proclaim. But I never stooped to disobeying 1 Peter 3:15. Even now, I don't call people fools in violation of the required *πραΰτης*. You can choose to disobey your alleged Lord, but you'll not want to then claim to be aligned with your own ideology. Talk it over with fellow Christians. Explore why they tend to distance themselves from you.

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Andrew Sills

Everyone of this guy's posts are "yadda yadda yadda. Now, do you disagree because you have faith?" Sir, the answer doesn't change regardless how you frame the question.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Andrew Sills My question is whether you have a system of morality by which you can know with certainty, based on particular principles, that Action A is immoral while Action B is moral? What is that system? And will I discover that those citing the very same foundation for morality will disagree with your moral conclusions?

- 1w
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- Reply

Andrew Sills

Phil Stilwell 1st Question- yes, I have a system. 2nd Question- It is by reading and understanding God's Word, and having the Holy Spirit convict me. 3rd Question- you will discover that there are varying degrees of conviction that sharpen over time but ultimately, everyone, even unbelievers, will come full circle to the same conclusion. There will be 2 results that stem from this process. All the rest of the fodder added into the equation is getting in the way of the Gospel.

- 1w
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- Reply

Lalo Guzmán

Andrew Sills How can you be certain that everyone, including unbelievers, will come to the same conclusion? I have 2000+ years of history that prove the opposite.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Andrew Sills I think "morality" is an empty term created as a facade on top of emotions. Its use is an effort to reify emotions, to give them obligatory weight. I have been challenging both theists and unbelievers on this for years, hoping someone could at least begin to substantiate an actual moral realm. No one has been able to do so thus far.

Would you like to try?

I'm sure you'll agree that any genuine moral calculus will be clear and unambiguous if it is to ground a moral realm. Let me first compare your moral calculus with the moral calculus of other theists. I will then ask you to "show your work" in arriving at your "moral" conclusions. Answer the following:

1a: It would be immoral not to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

1b: It would be morally permissible to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

2: It is immoral for divorced individuals to remarry.

3: It is immoral to have meals with apostates from Christianity.

4: It is immoral to knowingly exceed speed limits.

5: It is immoral for married couples to engage in oral or anal sex.

6: It is immoral to practice circumcision or clitoridectomies.

7: It would be moral for a government to kill homosexuals for being homosexual.

8: It is immoral to intentionally make someone believe you feel the opposite of what you actually feel about something.

9: It is immoral to spend this earthly life enjoying earthly pleasures when unGospelled unbelievers face eternity in Hell, when you will have eternity in Heaven to relax.

10: It is immoral to fight for a country in a war merely for more territory.

11: It is immoral to divorce over a spouse merely romantically kissing another individual.

12: It is immoral not to send money to help someone you know is starving to death.

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Andrew Sills

Lalo Guzmán because I have faith. And the Word of God declares it.

You do not have to believe. But you will know the truth when you die regardless if you believed or did not.

- 1w
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- Reply

Andrew Sills

Phil Stilwell no, to be honest I don't think I'd like to try to help you substantiate your misunderstanding of "morality". What a strange thing to ask of an apologetics group.

No, I'm here because I am the apologist. Affirming your hypothetical philosophical stance, powered by AI, would be quite unfruitful.

- 1w
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- Reply

Lalo Guzmán

Andrew Sills You can follow your standard on the basis of faith, but by doing so you cannot then claim certainty. If you want to argue that your standard is logically sound, then making arguments like "Oh everyone always reaches the same conclusion" on the basis of faith undermines those arguments. You either have faith or have certainty. You cannot have both.

And I don't need faith to prove that people most certainly don't get to the same conclusion. Hitler died thinking that what he did was right. Many old people die while still being racists, or being sexists. Your standard doesn't seem to be consistent with reality.

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Andrew Sills

Lalo Guzmán for your first paragraph. YOU can't have certainty with your definition of faith. But I can.

For the second paragraph, you've missed the point. Probably intentionally, but I'll clarify it anyway. When Hitler died, whether he believe in Christ crucified or not, and thereby whether he had the Spirit in him or not, he STILL knows now, with eternal certainty, that Christ is his Lord and therefore has the same moral understanding as those in paradise. But he would be looking from Hell.

But if you are referring to whether they reach the conclusion or not before death, the scripture tells us we cannot know the hearts of men. We can assume Hitler held fast to his sin to his last breath, but we would then be tiptoeing places we shouldn't.

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Andrew Sills There is nothing at all strange about asking you for the hope that is within you. (1 Peter 3:15) I am simply asking you to substantiate your notion of morality. Can you? Will you?

- 1w
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- Reply

Andrew Sills

Phil Stilwell no, you're not. You're asking me to assume your stance on morality and submit responses under that umbrella. And misusing a scripture verse to manipulate a further entanglement in such. Highbrow gaslighting, and using God's word to do it.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Andrew Sills I'm not asking you to assume my stance—I'm asking you to demonstrate yours. You say your moral system is rooted in God's Word and the Spirit's conviction, but when pressed for how that system yields clear, non-contradictory conclusions, the answers collapse into "because I have faith." That's not substantiation—it's assertion.

You accuse me of misusing 1 Peter 3:15, but notice the verse doesn't say "ignore hard questions" or "dismiss challenges as gaslighting." It says, "Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." I'm doing exactly that—asking you to give a reasoned account of how your claimed moral foundation actually works.

So the invitation stands: can you outline a consistent method by which Scripture and the Spirit yield moral clarity that Christians themselves do not dispute? Or does it reduce to the very incoherence I pointed out in the article: circular authority, fragmented interpretations, and reliance on faith alone?

- 1w
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- Reply

Andrew Sills

Phil Stilwell again, just highbrow gaslighting. You're obviously intelligent. And you know that each of the questions in your attempt at a "Gotcha!" quiz are very nuanced, yet you're looking for quick circular arguments. We could discuss each of those topics for hours but you know we won't. The very first one. Murder is immortal. But the question isn't "is murder immoral?" You're asking a Christian to define murder. Regardless how a Christian defines murder, God has it defined already. And then we inevitably end right back where I said in other comments the part about varying degrees of conviction. We do not receive the Spirit and instantly become perfectly discerning Christians.

If that were the case I wouldn't be so pissed off by you 😏).

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Andrew Sills I think you've inadvertently confirmed the very problem my post outlined.

✓ You admit Christians don't instantly gain "perfect discernment," and that convictions differ. But if the Spirit and Scripture together were truly delivering one coherent moral standard, believers guided by the same Spirit and reading the same Bible should converge far more than they do. Instead, as survey data show, dissent runs as high as 70-80% among Christians on issues like divorce, sexuality, and eternal punishment. That's not just nuance—that's fragmentation.

✓ You say God "already defines" what counts as murder. But notice the circularity: only God knows the definition, you claim, but our only access to that definition is through Scripture and Spirit—both of which yield contradictory interpretations among Christians. That means we never actually escape the circle or arrive at clarity.

✓ You dismiss my questions as "gotchas," but the point of them was precisely to test whether your system yields consistent moral conclusions. If the answers to those questions fracture among people claiming the same foundation, then the foundation is incoherent.

So we're left here: unless you can demonstrate a consistent method by which Christians can reliably determine what God's commands mean and how they apply, your appeal collapses back into faith alone. And faith, by definition, is not a demonstration of coherence but a declaration of trust without resolution of contradiction.

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- Reply

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Joe Price

This is for all my family in Christ, stop responding to this guy. He posts only to get a rise out of people. The Bible is clear as to how we should respond to such people.

But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. (2 Timothy 2:23)

But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned. (Titus 3:9-11)

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Joe Price I understand why you reach for verses that counsel avoidance. But notice: the very same New Testament that tells believers to avoid quarrels also gives this directive in 1 Peter 3:15 — “Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, yet do this with gentleness and respect.”

What I’m doing here is exactly that: asking Christians to explain the coherence of their moral framework. That isn’t “foolish controversy,” it’s testing whether the claims of Christianity stand up under scrutiny. If Christians retreat into silence whenever contradictions are raised, it suggests the foundation isn’t strong enough to face questions.

My post pointed out that the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and moral intuitions do not align, and that Christians themselves disagree profoundly on issues from sexuality to eternal punishment. That’s not me being “factious”—that’s observable data. If biblical morality is truly coherent and objective, then Christians should be able to show how these contradictions resolve.

If instead the strategy is to dismiss all hard questions as “foolish controversies,” then by definition Christianity shields itself from examination. But that would be the very opposite of what 1 Peter 3:15 prescribes: reasoned defense, with gentleness and respect.

- 1w
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- Reply

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Anonymous member 662

Yeah when people say ridiculous things like sexuality is up for debate, it seems like everything is delusional

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Anonymous member 662 What side are you on? And what was the substance of your post?

- 1w
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- Reply

Chris Hooter

Anonymous member 662 amen

- 1w
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- Reply

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Samuel Schaefer

The most simple breakdown I can offer regarding the relationship between God and humanity...

God Created the Heavens and the earth. God created humankind. God gave us His Law, the 10 Commandments. Humankind broke the Law. A perfectly holy God is loving, which requires Him to be perfectly just, which requires payment for the penalty of sin. Since sinful humans are unable to keep the Law, and unwilling to seek after God, He came to us in order to reconcile humanity back to Himself.

Jesus, God in the flesh, came to us, born by the Holy Spirit from a woman. Jesus lived the perfect sinless life we could not, died the death that we deserved, executed on a Roman cross, and rose again, proving God has accepted this sacrifice, and that Jesus is the conqueror over death. We broke the Law, Jesus paid the fine. God's love made it possible for reconciliation and His justice to be fulfilled.

All have sinned, all have broken God's Law, no one but Jesus ever being able to keep it perfectly. Those who repent from their sin and self-righteousness and place all their trust in Jesus and what He has done, will be saved, and have eternal life. To try to overlook God's Law, what He has commanded in His 10 Commandments (the standard of law for nearly all world civilization) is a common tactic of those who try to complain about the 'problems' and 'inconsistencies' in how Christians act...as what is usually pointed to is descriptive (rather than prescriptive) actions in the Bible, or the absolute acknowledgment of sin in mankind while failing to produce another objective source for morality than God.

Most people will agree with 7 or 8 of God's Commandments, but struggle with the 1st 2, denying God and who He is, and seeking to make their own 'god' in their own image that they are comfortable with. That is what I am guessing is going on with those producing or agreeing with this kind of post. If I am wrong, which of God's other Commandments of the 10 do you have a problem with? The issue is not that people can't follow a 'moral system' God's Word describes...but instead confirms people are not able to follow it, and need a Savior.

Until one is born again, repenting and trusting in Jesus and being saved from the Penalty of sin, they will have no chance of beginning to understand the next phase of a Christian's life - Sanctification - a lifelong process where day by day God saves the Christian from the Power of sin.

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Samuel Schaefer It appears you're presenting what Christians often call "the gospel in miniature." But the problem my post raises isn't whether your narrative is internally consistent within its own theological frame—it's whether that frame is coherent when tested against evidence and logic.

✓ You say God is "perfectly loving, which requires Him to be perfectly just, which requires payment for sin." But notice what's happening: you're defining love and justice in a way that happens to match the Christian story, not testing those definitions against independent standards. It's circular. If God commands genocide (1 Samuel 15:3), you must still call it loving and just, because His commands are your only yardstick. That empties the terms "love" and "justice" of any content—they become whatever God does, no matter how cruel.

✓ You point to the Ten Commandments as "the standard of law for nearly all world civilization." But history doesn't bear this out. Civilizations long before or outside the Hebrew tradition—Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Indian, Chinese—had their own codes with overlapping prohibitions (murder, theft, perjury) rooted in human pragmatics, not Sinai. This undercuts the claim that the Decalogue is a unique or universal foundation.

✓ You suggest critics "fail to produce another objective source for morality than God." But here's the problem: invoking God doesn't solve objectivity—it just relocates the question. How do we verify that God is moral in the first place? You say "look at His law," but the law itself is morally inconsistent: condoning slavery (Exodus 21), mandating stoning for minor infractions (Leviticus 20:9), and even sanctioning violence against innocents. Christians themselves reject or reinterpret many of these commands today. That's not objectivity—it's selective filtering.

✓ You emphasize that "all have sinned." But that's a framework assumption, not an independently verifiable fact. People across cultures disagree profoundly on what even counts as "sin," which itself exposes the incoherence I laid out: moral intuitions, biblical texts, and alleged Spirit-guidance all conflict. The data show this clearly: dissent among Christians on issues like divorce, masturbation, homosexuality, and eternal punishment often ranges from 30% to 80%. If the Spirit, the Bible, and God's law were delivering one coherent standard, why this fragmentation?

So to your closing question—"Which of God's other Commandments of the 10 do you have a problem with?"—I'd point out that this is the wrong framing. The real problem is not isolated commandments, but the deeper incoherence of the entire system. If a standard is truly objective, it must be (1) testable apart from assuming it true, (2) consistent across contexts, and (3) yield convergence rather than deep fragmentation. The Christian framework, by its own fruits, fails on all three counts.

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- Reply

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Dennis Fry

And you know these surveys are reliable how?

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Dennis Fry The Christian Thought Survey I designed and conducted myself.

<https://christianthoughtsurvey.wordpress.com>

Feel free to explore the data.

CHRISTIANTHOUGHTSURVEY.WORDPRESS.COM

Christian Thought Survey

Christian Thought Survey

- 1w
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- Reply
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Dennis Fry

And you surveyed how many Christians?

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Dennis Fry 406 Christians in ministry. The bulk of these were pastors, but some were missionaries, Christian authors, or seminary professors. Most of them remain my FB friends.

- 1w
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- Reply

Dennis Fry

So what is entire sample set possible?

- 3d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Dennis Fry could you rephrase that?

Perhaps your question is answered on this page? ↘ <https://christianthoughtsurvey.wordpress.com>

CHRISTIANTHOUGHTSURVEY.WORDPRESS.COM

Christian Thought Survey

Christian Thought Survey

- 3d
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- Reply
- Remove Preview
- Edited

Dennis Fry

Phil Stilwell How many Christians existed during the study?

- 2d
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- Reply

Dennis Fry

I'm asking your data set represents what % of the whole?

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Dennis Fry The whole of Christian ministers? Is that your question?

Take a look at the distribution and the number of questions to personally assess what degree of significance it commands.

🔗🔗

I think you'll find this link informative.

↳ <https://www.statsig.com/.../understanding-statistical...>

STATSIG.COM

Understanding statistical significance

Understanding statistical significance

- 2d
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- Reply
- Remove Preview
- Edited

Dennis Fry

Phil Stilwell What % of Christians does your study survey? Can you offer a rough approximation? It shouldn't be that hard to do.

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Dennis Fry no I shouldn't. The survey number is 406, and you're better equipped to express the number of "real" Christians.

Do your own calculation and make your own assessment of the value of the survey. Nearly all of the participants very much appreciated the public charts I provided as well as a personalized report. 🔗

It appears you're an outlier who would find no value in it. 🔗

- 2d
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- Reply

Dennis Fry

Phil Stilwell What you've effectively said is you don't know. I'll do the math for you then...

You surveyed approximately .0000154% of professing Christians in the world.

From this sample size and the feedback they've provided you have concluded that Christian ethics is nothing more than reification of emotion that is codified into morality.

Sound about right so far?

- 2d
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Dennis Fry bit start with an exploration of your moral system to explore whether or not it is defensible.

1a: It would be immoral not to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn. 1b: It would be morally permissible to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

2: It is immoral for divorced individuals to remarry.

3: It is immoral to have meals with apostates from Christianity.
4: It is immoral to knowingly exceed highway speed limits.
5: It is immoral for married couples to engage in oral or anal sex.
6: It is immoral to practice circumcision or clitoridectomies.
7: It would be moral for a government to kill homosexuals for being homosexual.
8: It is immoral to intentionally make someone believe you feel the opposite of what you actually feel about something.
Refusing to give someone your coat who has asked for it.
9: It is immoral to spend this earthly life enjoying earthly pleasures when unGospelled unbelievers face eternity in Hell, when you will have eternity in Heaven to relax.
10: It is immoral to fight for a country in a war merely to gain more territory.
11: It is immoral to divorce over a spouse merely romantically kissing another individual.
12: It is immoral not to send money to help someone you know is starving to death.
Remember, this is not about your moral positions on these 12 issues. It is to establish your moral beliefs so I can compare them with other Christians. In the past, I've noted that Christians have been all over the map on these issues, most of them quite pertinent to today's social climate. You seem to be arguing Christians have finally gotten their moral act together. I will assess the truth of that claim based on your responses as I compare them to the responses from other Christians.

- 2d
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- Reply
- Edited

Dennis Fry

Phil Stilwell I'll answer your questions after you address some foundational issues first.

- 2d
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- Reply

Dennis Fry

Phil Stilwell If you can't answer my basic questions why should I bother answering yours?

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Dennis Fry I'll do my honest best to answer your questions. Give me several (all you can think of), and I'll answer them all at one time. After you're satisfied I'm here to dialogue in good faith, I'll then ask my questions again under the assumption you would also like to have a productive discussion.

Let's now have your questions.

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- Reply
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Craig Giddens

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Craig Giddens I'll happily "keep the receipt." The point of my post wasn't just an opinion—it was backed with specific evidence:

- ✓ The Bible contains contradictory commands (slavery endorsed in Exodus 21 vs. love-your-neighbor injunctions).
- ✓ The Holy Spirit's alleged guidance produces divergent convictions among Christians on major issues like sexuality, violence, and eternal punishment.
- ✓ Moral intuitions, which some Christians say reflect God's law, diverge across cultures and even within churches.
- ✓ Surveys of ministers show dissent levels as high as 70–80% on moral questions, undermining the claim of one coherent standard.

That's not "just an opinion." That's observable data. If you think the system is coherent, then the receipt I'd ask you for is the evidence that ties all three pillars—the Bible, the Spirit, and moral intuitions—into one consistent standard.

- 1w
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- Reply

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Dean Matthew Izzard

In reasoning/logic, there are vicious circles, and virtuous circles. Not all circles are irrational.

There are no contradictory commands in Scripture. The reason people are troubled is because it points out their own sinfulness.

The purpose of the Scriptures is to show us that we cannot live perfectly moral lives:

Romans 4:13-16 (ESV) 13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. 16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring--not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

John 5:39-40 (ESV) 39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Dean Matthew Izzard I have a degree in philosophy and confidently assert there is no such thing as virtuous circularity.

P1: For an argument to justify a conclusion, its premises must provide independent support for that conclusion.

P2: In circular arguments, the conclusion is presupposed within the premises.

P3: If the conclusion is already assumed, the premises do not provide independent support.

P4: Without independent support, justification fails.

Conclusion: Therefore, circular arguments cannot be virtuous; all circularity is epistemically vicious.

- 1w
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- Reply

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John Hart

Not even worth taking the time to answer

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

John Hart I'll keep it brief then: if a claim is true, it should be able to stand up to scrutiny. Declaring it "not worth answering" sidesteps the very test 1 Peter 3:15 calls Christians to—always be ready to give a reason for the hope that you have.

- 1w
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- Reply

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Christian Dubose

First, just because there's disagreement on something doesn't mean there isn't a truth. Many disagree on historical events, but that doesn't mean the event didn't happen. I would argue that if you truly understand the laws and covenants, there are no contradictory laws

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Christian Dubose let's explore that. I think "morality" is an empty term created as a facade on top of emotions. Its use is an effort to reify emotions, to give them obligatory weight. I have been challenging both theists and unbelievers on this for years, hoping someone could at least begin to substantiate an actual moral realm. No one has been able to do so thus far. Would you like to try?

I'm sure you'll agree that any genuine moral calculus will be clear and unambiguous if it is to ground a moral realm. Let me first compare your moral calculus with the moral calculus of other theists. I will then ask you to "show your work" in arriving at your "moral" conclusions. Answer the following:

1a: It would be immoral not to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

1b: It would be morally permissible to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

2: It is immoral for divorced individuals to remarry.

3: It is immoral to have meals with apostates from Christianity.

4: It is immoral to knowingly exceed speed limits.

5: It is immoral for married couples to engage in oral or anal sex.

6: It is immoral to practice circumcision or clitoridectomies.

7: It would be moral for a government to kill homosexuals for being homosexual.

8: It is immoral to intentionally make someone believe you feel the opposite of what you actually feel about something.

9: It is immoral to spend this earthly life enjoying earthly pleasures when unGospelled unbelievers face eternity in Hell, when you will have eternity in Heaven to relax.

10: It is immoral to fight for a country in a war merely for more territory.

11: It is immoral to divorce over a spouse merely romantically kissing another individual.

12: It is immoral not to send money to help someone you know is starving to death.

- 1w
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Ben Kriel

What a ridiculous concept. History shows that where Christianity is pushed out, a society starts to destroy itself.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Ben Kriel the initial post was about morality. Would you like to contribute something? ☑ Do you have a coherent moral system you'd like to introduce for assessment? ☑

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Ben Kriel

Phil Stilwell Assessment by you, or some AI generated algorithm? No, thanks.

Morals is not a concept, it's an action on a belief system.

If you believe it's okay to offer a sacrifice to ie a golden calf, then your morals are build around it is evident in the action you take.

You error is simple:

Christianity is not based on a moral code of some kind. It's based on the belief system that the Spirit of God provides through Scripture.

There is a personal intimacy in this, since God is not some golden calf. He is very real and very personal.

Human morality is flawed, because humans are inconsistent.

Today I want a red car, tomorrow I would rather have wanted a white one, etc.

The Bible is consistent, because God is consistent.

By saying you reject one, you also reject the other. Simple principle.

And here's another one for you: An tree is known by its fruit.

You'll never convince a real follower of Christ and Scripture to even consider your analogy of morality, simply because we know our Father's voice.

Like it or not, you're preaching your views to the wrong crowd.

- 1w
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Ben Kriel Notice what you've done. You've shifted from morality to faith, but the original question was precisely whether Christianity supplies a coherent moral framework.

✓ You say Christianity is "not based on a moral code," but then immediately appeal to "fruit" as evidence of its truth. But fruit is judged as good or bad by some moral standard. If Christianity denies having a moral code, it cannot then use moral outcomes as its validation. That's circular.

✓ You say "the Bible is consistent because God is consistent." Yet Christians who claim the same Spirit and the same Bible disagree profoundly on slavery, sexuality, violence, women's roles, and eternal punishment. If the system were truly consistent, its outcomes would converge. They don't.

✓ You also say "a tree is known by its fruit," but history shows plenty of rotten fruit: Christians defending slavery, burning heretics, justifying genocide, and still today splitting into factions over what counts as sin. That divergence shows the alleged consistency is not in the text itself but in selective interpretation.

So the question remains: if Christianity isn't a moral system but claims its fruit proves it is true, what standard are you using to call the fruit "good" in the first place? Unless you can show a clear and consistent moral calculus, you've simply replaced morality with blind loyalty.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Here's a plain English version:

Your defense relies on shifting the discussion from morality to faith, but when pressed it collapses. You say Christianity isn't based on a moral code, yet you immediately appeal to "fruit"—good outcomes—as evidence of its truth. But calling fruit "good" already requires a moral standard. If that standard comes from within Christianity, the reasoning is circular: Christianity is good because Christianity's own code says so. If it comes from outside, then Christianity depends on an external code after all, which undercuts your claim that it isn't a moral system.

Beyond that, Christians who claim the same Bible and the same Spirit arrive at contradictory moral verdicts—on slavery, sexuality, violence, eternal punishment, and more. If the system were truly consistent, its outcomes would converge. They don't, which means the alleged consistency is an illusion.

Finally, the historical "fruit" is mixed at best. The same system that produced abolitionists also produced defenders of slavery; the same Bible invoked for compassion was also invoked for persecution and violence. If fruit is the test, then Christianity fails, because the evidence is deeply contradictory.

So the appeal to "fruit" either becomes circular, borrows from an external standard, collapses under internal disagreement, or falters under history's evidence. None of that shows a coherent moral framework.

- 1w
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- Reply

Ben Kriel

Phil Stilwell Your analogy does not sway me a bit, because you rely on a system that is imperfect in your attempt to counter argue a point that you have missed. When you find it, try again.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Ben Kriel Notice what you've done again: you've dismissed the critique without addressing it. Saying my system is "imperfect" doesn't answer the challenge—it actually illustrates it.

✓ The question is not whether my framework is perfect. The question is whether yours is coherent. If you say Christianity is validated by its "fruit," you still need a clear, non-circular standard for why that fruit is "good." Simply declaring that standard to be God's consistency does not resolve the contradictions in how Christians interpret His commands.

✓ Pointing out flaws in other systems doesn't repair the fractures in your own. For instance, Christians divided over slavery: both sides claimed the same Spirit, the same Bible, and the same God. If the foundation were consistent, those outcomes would converge. They didn't—and they still don't today on sexuality, violence, or eternal punishment.

✓ The problem remains: unless you can show the specific principles by which the Bible, the Spirit, and moral intuitions consistently align, then Christianity is not offering a coherent moral framework. It's offering faith layered with selective interpretation, which is exactly what I highlighted.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Here are a few suggestions on avoiding logical fallacies:

1. Historical Assertion without Evidence

"History shows that where Christianity is pushed out, a society starts to destroy itself."

Fallacy: Hasty Generalization / False Cause.

No broad historical data is given. Societies decline for multiple reasons—economics, politics, war, environment. To attribute "destruction" solely to the absence of Christianity is an unsupported causal leap.

2. Evasion by Attacking the Interlocutor

"Assessment by you, or some AI generated algorithm? No, thanks."

Fallacy: Ad Hominem / Dismissal.

This shifts attention away from the argument to who is making it. Whether the critique comes from me or an algorithm is irrelevant to whether the reasoning is sound.

3. Redefinition without Resolution

"Morals is not a concept, it's an action on a belief system."

Fallacy: Equivocation.

Ben redefines "morals" but doesn't address the central question of coherence. Redefinition doesn't answer whether Christianity provides a consistent framework; it just clouds the terms.

4. Circular Reasoning

"The Bible is consistent, because God is consistent. By saying you reject one, you also reject the other."

Fallacy: Begging the Question.

This assumes the very thing at issue—that God’s consistency ensures the Bible’s consistency. But the evidence (contradictions, disagreements) directly challenges that assumption.

5. Appeal to Faith as Proof

“You’ll never convince a real follower of Christ...because we know our Father’s voice.”

Fallacy: Argument from Faith / Special Pleading.

This places the claim beyond examination: “we know because we know.” It exempts itself from critique rather than showing coherence.

6. Appeal to Selective Evidence

“A tree is known by its fruit.”

Fallacy: Cherry-Picking.

Ben points to perceived “good fruit” but ignores the historical “bad fruit” also produced by Christianity (slavery, persecution, sectarian violence). A fair assessment would weigh both.

7. Whataboutism / Tu Quoque

“Your system is imperfect...When you find it, try again.”

Fallacy: Tu Quoque.

Pointing out flaws in another system doesn’t establish the coherence of his own. The question was about Christianity’s moral framework, not mine.

- 1w
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- Reply

Ben Kriel

Phil Stilwell Firstly, your attempt to ban circular reasoning is invalid in itself. Circular reasoning has its purposes in many fields, not only the religious.

Secondly, define Christians to me as you understand it, because I can promise you many call themselves Christian by name, yet do not believe in Christ as their redeemer. They rather believe in a system of works as a way to earn salvation, yet call themselves Christian. I suspect the flaws you point out has a lot to do with your own understanding of this.

Lastly, the whole legal system we follow today is based in the law of Moses, known as the moral law from Exodus 20. It is coherent enough that it is still used today.. even by non-Christians.

Anyway, I told you I’m really not interested in your analogy. God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Bible and God’s church have existed long before your AI reasoning, and will remain to exist well after you die.

You and I are but a spec of dust for a brief period of time, but God is eternal as is the things of God. You won’t change it.

- 6d
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Ben Kriel your latest reply confirms several of the issues I’ve raised—particularly your unwillingness to examine the internal coherence of your position. Let’s walk through your main claims:

✓ 1. "Circular reasoning has its purposes in many fields"

You’re right that benign circularity (like using inductive reasoning to justify induction) can be pragmatically defensible. But not vicious circularity, which is what you’ve deployed. When you argue:

“God is good because the Bible says so, and the Bible is true because it comes from God,”

you haven’t anchored your claim in anything externally verifiable. You’re assuming what needs to be demonstrated. If you were evaluating any non-Christian system that used the same logic—say, the Qur’an or the Bhagavad Gita—you’d rightly reject it.

✓ 2. "Define Christians..."

You’re now retreating to the “No True Christian” defense. The moment your system produces moral confusion or contradictory outcomes, you redefine those responsible as “not real Christians.”

This tactic dodges responsibility. If Christianity is knowable, true, and spiritually guided, why do sincere, studied, devoted believers—who all believe in Jesus as redeemer—continue to reach opposing moral conclusions on issues like:

slavery (historically endorsed and opposed),

violence (from Crusades to pacifism),

sexuality,

eternal punishment?

A system that requires filtering out all dissenting voices as “not real Christians” is not clarifying truth—it’s curating agreement through exclusion.

✓ 3. "Our modern legal system is based on Exodus 20"

This is a historical oversimplification. Modern legal systems (especially those in secular democracies) are products of Roman law, Enlightenment thought, English common law, and rational philosophy, not merely Mosaic law.

The commandments not to murder or steal are not uniquely biblical—they're found in virtually every legal code and culture. What modern legal systems don't retain are:
death for adultery or Sabbath-breaking,
approval of slavery,
punishment of children for parents' sins,
stoning of non-believers.

The parts of Mosaic law not retained in modern law are just as telling as those that are.

✓ 4. "I'm not interested in your analogy"

Refusing to engage with critique doesn't make the critique disappear. You began this thread by declaring that societies collapse when Christianity is removed. That is a claim—and claims require defense.

You've now shifted from reasoning to reverence:

"God existed before you and will exist after you... You are dust."

This may be your conviction, but it's not an argument. It's a declaration of faith. I'm not trying to "change God." I'm asking you to account for the logical and moral coherence of your belief system. If your response is to fall back on "God is eternal," you've exited the realm of public reason and entered private devotion—which is fine, but then you're no longer in the debate you entered.

To Sum Up:

✓ You haven't offered a coherent standard of morality—just trust in God's authority.

✓ You redefine terms mid-discussion to shield your view from critique (e.g., "real Christians").

✓ You invoke law and history selectively while ignoring massive theological and cultural complexity.

✓ You ultimately retreat from reasoning to proclamation.

I'm not asking for perfection. I'm asking for clarity and coherence. If Christianity claims to offer a moral foundation for the world, then it must be open to the same kind of scrutiny every other worldview endures.

The invitation remains: Can you define your moral framework in clear, non-circular terms, or is "God said so" the beginning and end of your ethics?

- 7m
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- Reply

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Joshua Woods

Don't the "Greatest Commandment" proclaimed by Jesus and the 10 Commandments act as "an objective coherent moral system?"

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Joshua Woods clearly not. Many Christians believe that remarriage after divorce is adultery while a whole group of others do not. ☒

I think "morality" is an empty term created as a facade on top of emotions. Its use is an effort to reify emotions, to give them obligatory weight. I have been challenging both theists and unbelievers on this for years, hoping someone could at least begin to substantiate an actual moral realm. No one has been able to do so thus far.

Would you like to try?

I'm sure you'll agree that any genuine moral calculus will be clear and unambiguous if it is to ground a moral realm. Let me first compare your moral calculus with the moral calculus of other theists. I will then ask you to "show your work" in arriving at your "moral" conclusions. Answer the following:

1a: It would be immoral not to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

1b: It would be morally permissible to kill abortion doctors if it protected the unborn.

2: It is immoral for divorced individuals to remarry.

3: It is immoral to have meals with apostates from Christianity.

4: It is immoral to knowingly exceed speed limits.

5: It is immoral for married couples to engage in oral or anal sex.

6: It is immoral to practice circumcision or clitoridectomies.

7: It would be moral for a government to kill homosexuals for being homosexual.

8: It is immoral to intentionally make someone believe you feel the opposite of what you actually feel about something.

9: It is immoral to spend this earthly life enjoying earthly pleasures when unGospelled unbelievers face eternity in Hell, when you will have eternity in Heaven to relax.

10: It is immoral to fight for a country in a war merely for more territory.

11: It is immoral to divorce over a spouse merely romantically kissing another individual.

12: It is immoral not to send money to help someone you know is starving to death.

- 1w
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Danrave Comique

ohh well it is granted that we Christians have disagreements regarding this and that, but it doesn't imply that there is no truth

but to these skeptics, did you have no disagreements on such, such things? and of course by your grandiose self acclamation declares that Christianity is a lie and your skepticism, will lead to the truth?

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Danrave Comique I hold that there is no coherent moral system. You are a Christian, so you presumably do believe there is a coherent moral system. Offer up your moral system, and we'll together assess its coherence.

- 1w
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- Reply

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James Hodge

Let's play a game: find the implied logical fallacy in OP's post.

- 1w
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

James Hodge — Let me join in since I've taught critical thinking at university for years and have a site on logical fallacies that I and my students have created: <https://logfall.wordpress.com/>

1. Alleged Strawman

✓ Appearance: James might suggest that the OP sets up a "strawman" by oversimplifying Christian moral epistemology into only three sources (Bible, Spirit, intuitions).

✓ Why it's not: The graphic and the OP explicitly engage the very sources Christians themselves commonly claim as foundations of moral knowledge. This is not a misrepresentation but a direct assessment of Christianity's own stated pillars.

2. Alleged Circular Reasoning

✓ Appearance: James might claim the OP's argument assumes from the start that biblical morality fails, then concludes the same.

✓ Why it's not: The OP does not assume the conclusion. It sets out independent reasons: contradictions in the Bible, inconsistencies in intuitions, conflicting reports of Spirit guidance, and survey data. These are empirical and conceptual supports, not presuppositions. The circularity identified is in the Christian system itself (i.e., "God is moral because He says so"), not in the OP's critique.

3. Alleged Hasty Generalization

✓ Appearance: James might argue that citing disagreements among Christians is a hasty generalization that doesn't prove the whole system fails.

✓ Why it's not: The point is not anecdotal but systemic: if a divine, objective moral compass truly existed, one would expect convergence rather than massive denominational and individual divergence. The data illustrate precisely the opposite, undercutting the claim of objectivity.

4. Alleged False Dichotomy

✓ Appearance: James might say the OP sets up a false choice: either Christianity delivers a coherent objective morality or it fails entirely.

✓ Why it's not: The critique doesn't deny there could be partial insights, but it challenges the claim of objectivity and coherence. The system can have pragmatic or cultural value yet still fail on its own stated terms. That's not a false dichotomy but a test of consistency against its professed standard.

5. Alleged Appeal to Emotion

✓ Appearance: The use of the phrase "blind obedience" may look like an appeal to emotion.

✓ Why it's not: It is not used to stir fear but to describe epistemic reality: believers are required to obey divine commands without a method to independently test their moral validity. It's an epistemic, not emotional, critique.

6. Alleged Overgeneralization / Composition Fallacy

✓ Appearance: James could say the OP generalizes from contradictions in some passages or believers to claim the whole system fails.

✓ Why it's not: The examples (contradictory commands, conflicting intuitions, inconsistent Spirit guidance) are not isolated; they are pervasive across core issues like violence, sexuality, slavery, and salvation. The systemic scope makes the conclusion inductively strong rather than fallacious.

Conclusion

James' "find the fallacy" challenge misses the mark. What looks like fallacies dissolve on inspection: the OP does not misrepresent Christian claims, does not argue circularly, and does not rely on shallow generalizations. Rather, the post presents a cumulative case showing that each alleged foundation of biblical morality fails to deliver the promised objectivity. What remains is not a fallacy-ridden rant, but a sustained internal critique.

LOGFALL.WORDPRESS.COM

Logfall - Logical Fallacies

Logfall - Logical Fallacies

- 1w
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Simon Schmidt

Phil Stilwell all these claims without a single example, nor a single alternative offered. Do some serious actual Bible study, then perhaps we can take this seriously.

- 6d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Simon Schmidt you have a coherent system of morality you'd like to present? It's not found in the Bible. ☹

- 5d
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- Reply

Simon Schmidt

Phil Stilwell You're the one making a claim. Therefore you're also the one that is required to back it up. Anything else is just trolling.

- 1d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Simon Schmidt the claim is akin to telling everyone they have no kids. A simple posting of evidence to the contrary would resolve the issue. When I say you have no coherent moral system, all it would take to counter that is to provide a coherent moral system. ☹

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Joe Kelly

So... you are talking about prots not the Bible. Would you like to try again?

- 6d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Joe Kelly you have an open invitation to present your comprehensive system of morality.

- 5d
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- Reply

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Chris Nelson

Phil, you project your own evil, just stop it, repent and believe the gospel while it is still light.

- 4d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Chris Nelson that's what I used to preach from the pulpit. <https://freeoffaith.com/reasons/>

FREEOFFAITH.COM

Reasons

Reasons

- 4d
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Ranto Nirilala

"Freeoffaith", does it mean becoming an atheist? There's nothing more illogical and irrational than atheism. Even atheist morality is illogical. You should also do some research on that side of things.

- 3d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Ranto Nirilala free of faith simply means mapping your degree of belief to the degree of the evidence. If you have evidence for God, to that degree, you should believe in God. But a rational God is not one who encourages people to believe beyond the evidence. That God is itself irrational.

Faith is not your friend. It is intrinsically irrational. ↘ <https://freeoffaith.com/faith/>

And if you have evidence for God, why hide it under a bushel? ☹

FREEOFFAITH.COM

Faith vs Rationality

Faith vs Rationality

- 3d
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- Reply

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- Edited

Ranto Nirilala

Phil Stilwell And if I stop being a believer, is atheism the alternative you're offering? But is atheism really as rational and logical as it claims? Have you ever looked into it yourself, or have you just stayed focused on criticizing faith?

- 3d
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Ranto Nirilala this will allow you to understand how serious I am about critiquing my own beliefs.

🔗 <https://freeoffaith.com/reasons/>

FREEOFFAITH.COM

Reasons

Reasons

- 3d
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- Reply
- Remove Preview

Ranto Nirilala

Phil Stilwell I don't see any examination of the logical and rational consistency of atheist philosophy in the links you shared. Is atheist philosophy, which was invented by man, really as rational and logical as it claims to be?

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Ranto Nirilala that could be because I'm not an atheist. Where are you getting your information? 🗨️

I teach critical thinking at universities. Would you like to engage me on the definition and application of rationality? 🗨️

- 2d
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- Reply

Ranto Nirilala

Phil Stilwell In the last link you shared, all you mention are emotional change, freedom and joy. But let's be honest, even a fool can feel happy. So is your sense of happiness and freedom really grounded in the truth, logic, and rationality of atheism, or is it simply fueled by your dislike of the Christian faith?

- 2d
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- Reply

Ranto Nirilala

Phil Stilwell So if you're not an atheist, does that mean you believe in the existence of some kind of deity?

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Ranto Nirilala While I hold that the God of mainstream Christianity is logically incoherent, there definitely could be a deistic creator of the universe. Such a deistic God is not certain, but still possible. I currently assign such a God around a 15% credence.

- 11m
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- Reply

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Ben Hendricks

A reminder for believers here regarding every hollow argument skeptics like Phil post to try to shake your faith: There is no substance to anything he says.

None.

Skeptics who spend so much time trolling Christian apologetics groups, aren't interested in what is true, they just want to try to derail the faith of those who have something worth believing in. Always remember before taking anything he says to heart that in Christ you have what skeptics simply wish they did:

- * Clearly defined purpose to life
- * Clearly defined morality
- * Clearly defined destiny
- * Clearly defined hope
- * Clearly defined value
- * Clearly defined justice
- * Clearly defined meaning for your existence

Someone clinging to a failed worldview that can't give legitimate answers to any of those important questions is in no position to critique your beliefs with any authority whatsoever. They just want you to be as confused and hopeless as they are.

Respond to their arguments if you want, but never forget that the popular argument from so many prominent atheists that life is devoid of any value gives you every reason to treat their arguments against God as equally devoid of value from the start.

- 2d
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- Reply
- Edited

Phil Stilwell

Ben Hendricks, you've listed several categories—purpose, morality, destiny, hope, value, justice, and meaning—as though they can only be supplied by Christianity. Let's clarify what those terms actually mean outside of your theological bubble:

✓ Purpose – In secular terms, purpose isn't "assigned" by an outside agent; it is constructed. Humans set goals, create projects, and build lives around things they find meaningful. That is purpose. I've had a wonderful, purpose-filled life centered around my friends, profession, and family. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

✓ Morality – I don't deal in a nonexistent "moral realm." What people call morality reduces to evolved instincts, social agreements, and emotional responses. There is no floating set of "moral facts." What exists are behaviors that foster cooperation or harm it, and those get dressed up in moral language. Engage me with a full explanation of your moral system if you disagree.

✓ Destiny – That word presumes cosmic scripting. In reality, our futures are open-ended, shaped by causes and contingencies. "Destiny" is a literary concept, not an ontological one. I explore who I am, life's possibilities, and then create my own path. Hitherto, my path has been incredibly fulfilling!

✓ Hope – Hope is a psychological state, not evidence of divine promises. People can hope for recovery, progress, or future flourishing without invoking supernatural guarantees. Hope is a very common but very poor foundation for truth.

✓ Value – Value is relational and context-dependent. A person has value to their friends, family, and community because of the bonds and benefits they bring—not because a deity assigns a price tag. My emotions create my valuing of my kids. Consider the biblical God's devaluing of infants (1 Samuel 15:3)

✓ Justice – Justice is not a property of the universe waiting to be discovered. It is a social invention to manage conflict and balance competing interests. Different cultures construct different systems of justice—none descend from the heavens. And justice is far from an infinite punishment for finite offenses.

✓ Meaning – Meaning is interpretive. Humans create narratives, art, science, and community that generate meaning. It doesn't have to be written into the cosmos to be real for us. As with purpose, destiny, and value, meaning is simply emergent from what we assign meaning to. I have three children who bring me joy. I don't need a God to tell me they should be meaningful to me. ↘ <https://freeoffaith.com/.../meaning-mongers-purpose.../>
So when you say skeptics “can't give legitimate answers,” what you really mean is they don't give your answers—the ones you think must be prepackaged by a deity. But your categories only look “clearly defined” because you presuppose a God who defines them. Strip that presupposition away, and the terms can still be explained in ways that match lived human experience.

FREEOFFAITH.COM

✓ Meaning Mongers – Purpose Packagers

✓ Meaning Mongers – Purpose Packagers

- 2d
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- Reply
- Remove Preview
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Ben Hendricks

Phil Stilwell this comment wasn't for you. We've been over all your weak arguments already. They are no more convincing now than they were before.

I will continue to post this reply to any skeptic's posts in these Christian apologetics groups to help make sure no believers are swayed by these baseless arguments and so they remember the unshakable hope they already have that atheism could never offer anyone.

Until your next post!

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Ben Hendricks thank you for your reply. I don't take offense at you saying this comment wasn't meant for me—I understand you're writing to encourage fellow believers, not necessarily to engage further with me. Still, since you mention me directly, I'll respond in good will.

I don't expect you to be swayed by my arguments any more than I am swayed by yours, but I hope you can see that my participation here isn't about trying to make anyone “hopeless.” Quite the opposite: I believe honest dialogue—where both sides clarify their terms, expose their assumptions, and test their claims—is one of the most respectful things humans can do for each other. That's why I engage. Not to “troll,” but to show that skepticism can be thoughtful, rigorous, and grounded in concern for truth.

If you continue reposting your message to shield believers from outside perspectives, that's your choice. I'll continue posting mine so that those same believers, if they're curious, can weigh both sides. Some will dismiss me outright, some may think more deeply, and a few might even begin to ask themselves questions they hadn't before. That's what dialogue does.

I don't think either of us gains much by reducing the other's position to “baseless” or “failed.” I acknowledge that Christianity gives you a strong narrative of purpose and hope. I simply argue that such things can be understood and lived without invoking a divine author. We can disagree there, but it doesn't need to be hostile.

I wish you well, and if you ever want to move from posting pre-set reminders to actually exploring where our differences lie in depth, I'm always ready for that conversation.

- 2d
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Andrew Higgins

Weak argument against moral intuitions. So what if they sometimes conflict with The Bible? Sometimes I hear my dog who died a year ago. Sometimes I see my friend, but it's actually a total stranger in the distance. Detectors can get things wrong >0 times while still being trustworthy sources of information.

- 2d
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- Reply

Phil Stilwell

Andrew Higgins my point is that Christianity doesn't have a coherent moral system. ☒ In the end, all they have is blind obedience as seen in 1 Samuel 15:3. ☒

- 2d
-
- Reply
- Edited

Andrew Higgins

Phil Stilwell

They have obedience, but not absolute obedience. You're forgetting that when Abraham argued with God over destroying Sodom, God rewarded his audacity by having increasingly generous standards for Sodom's salvation. Obedience is important, but it's not that simple, and it's certainly not supposed to be blind.