

Excerpt from the Livestream by @disorganized.religion on TikTok, March 12, 2024  
*Outline and transcript generated by the author with support from otter.ai.*

## **OUTLINE**

### **Missionaries, biblical literalism, and crystals in a religious context.**

- Speaker reflects on the problematic nature of missionary work, while also acknowledging the potential for learning and growth through humble dialogue.

### **Jesus' role as Messiah and Christian leadership.**

- Jesus' non-fulfillment of Messianic expectations is explored through the lens of colonialism and the reinterpretation of the temple as the living body of Christ.

### **Reflections on Matthew 18 (sermon text)**

- Speaker discusses the concept of forgiveness in Christianity, emphasizing the importance of trust and parity within a community.
- Jesus' statement "Wherever two or three are gathered, there I am" is interpreted as a collective leadership model, with everyone having the power to forgive and bind in heaven.

### **Christianity, gender roles, and social justice.**

- Paul advocates for women in ministry and inclusivity in the kingdom of God.
- The speaker discusses their interpretation of Christianity, including their views on homosexuality, marriage, and the rapture, as well as their disagreement with certain religious beliefs and practices.

### **Deconstruction, reconstruction, and faith.**

- Deconstruction involves questioning and reevaluating one's faith and cultural practices, often with the help of a group.
- Speaker suggests organizing a "reconstruction group" on Zoom or Discord to help people find faith and community after a period of separation from church.
- Speaker highlights religious and cultural connections, using the Christian impact on school calendars and holidays as an example
- Speaker believes in the Trinity as a useful construction but also acknowledges the diversity of beliefs within the church, including non-theistic, theistic, and agnostic perspectives.

### **Christianity, Jesus, and inclusivity in the Speaker's local church.**

- Speaker shares stories about her local church, emphasizing that they prioritize making a positive impact in the community through acts of service, such as feeding the hungry and welcoming strangers, while also acknowledging the imperfections and flaws of its members.
- Speaker discusses their church's approach to children in worship, including providing materials for kids to stay engaged and two professional nursery care workers.

### **Closing Thoughts**

- Speaker shares they do consider themselves evangelical (they're talking about Jesus on social media).
- Speaker encourages civic engagement and thanks viewers for their participation in the live stream and for the ways they create meaningful community online

## **TRANSCRIPT**

*Audience comments read out loud during the livestream are indicated in bold.*

Welcome to stream!

### **What's my opinion of missionaries?**

It depends on the missionary. If you call yourself a missionary, that feels problematic... I feel like missionary exercises are generally tied up in colonialism for the most part. But there are theories of mission that connect mission to reconciliation, for example. So if a missionary is going to learn about a faith or a tradition that's different from themselves to like, gain wisdom and say, "Hey, I'm showing up not knowing much. And this is the limited wisdom I have to offer. But I'd love to learn from yours." That's very different.

### **Is biblical literalism useful? Has it ever been useful?**

I would say it's not arguably not possible. We don't... Language is contextual. Like if I say that the sanctuary is "lit." I could either mean the candles are lit, I could mean that it's great party. It can mean a lot of different things. Language is contextual.

### **Is the United Church of Christ accepting of people who use crystals?**

Yes. Although the United Church of Christ is quite diverse, so I wouldn't say 100% of people in the United Church of Christ understand the use of crystals, but certainly at my church, if people use crystals, nobody's going to be like, "Shame!" or something like that, you know? There's a lot that we don't understand. And so if someone comes to me and says, "I've had this experience of crystals being healing in my life," it feels really arrogant for me to be like, "That's not possible, because my, like, one perspective on faith, doesn't talk a whole lot about that."

### **Why does Jesus not fulfill the Messiah stuff? You're also Christian, so you ask with all respect.**

Say more about that. The expectation was certainly that he would overthrow the Roman Empire and save Judea, right? That he would be another Cyrus the Great, return all the, you know, all the people from the diaspora. By the time the Gospels were written, at least three of them, Rome had invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. So by the time the Gospels are written, the stories we have about Jesus, right, he's supposed to be a force to overthrow the empire. But he was not the force that people expected. Right? He didn't come in with a big military army, the way Cyrus the Great did—all those passages in Isaiah that we think are about Jesus as Christians that were really about Cyrus a great. I mean, we can we can say, "Hey, this also resonates with my understanding of who Jesus is," but they weren't written about Jesus.

### **The temple should be rebuilt?**

Yeah. So, the way some Christians will look at the text is to say that the temple is actually the Living Body of Christ. So the temple being rebuilt is now God is in the world. God is not just limited to Jerusalem, but God is everywhere, in the Living Body of Christ in

humanity, and that is the rebuilt, resurrected temple. Some folks also interpret the temple being rebuilt is the resurrection of Jesus himself.

I would argue that the more you read Scripture, the more you read the teachings of Jesus, the more uncomfortable you become with colonialism. For example, am I doing a sermon series for Lent. Hi Daniel. Yes, I'm using a Sanctified Art. So we're following the story of Peter, through his journey of following Jesus—so becoming a disciple, and then you know, Jesus, calling him Satan last week, that's a fun one! And then this week, we have but the the passage about forgiveness, right—if you should forgive someone, seven times 70 times. But also, if someone hurts you, you should go to them directly.

Now, we also talked about how that's a privileged position, right? Like, if it's my boss, or someone who has more physical power, or more like another kind of power than I do, it's not appropriate to assume that I will go to them and say, “Hey, by the way, you did something that was hurtful,” right? Like without a lot of protection and trust within a system. It's impossible to do that. But I also think that shows that that's a model of Christian community—that we are meant to trust one another, and have that parity, such that we're able to call each other on our stuff.

It's also really interesting in this text, it says, “Wherever two or three are gathered, there I am.” and “whatever you bind on heaven, or whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven.” or “if you forgive people here, they're forgiven.” And Jesus said that same thing to Peter a couple chapters earlier, so I also feel like this is a good correction text to say, “Oh, by the way, I know I said Peter was in charge, but I didn't mean he was like IN CHARGE in like a Roman hierarchical like he's at the top of the paterfamilias as Bishop of the Universe. Everyone has that power.

So as a Protestant, right, it's a...it's a way of saying leadership should be collective.

### **“On the rock he builds his church”**

Yeah, “on the rock, he builds his church.” Right. So Peter is the foundation, he says, but I think that's that passage—I think it's probably actually more about helping Peter feel okay about himself. Like Peter's just tried to walk on water and fallen in. He's having a lot of self-doubt. And Jesus was like, “No, no, like you have gifts for leadership! I will build my Church on the rock,” you know, “You are the rock on which I will build my church.” I think Jesus is recognizing gifts in Peter that Peter definitely has. But he's not saying “Oh, and Peter, you were the only foundation.” Right? He's not saying “You are forever the go-to for theology, etc.”

I mean, if we believe as Christians, right, “there's neither male or female slave or free, Greek or Jew all are one in Christ Jesus,” well, how am I going to get to know God? And this idea of the Living Body of Christ...if I'm only in this like tiny bubble, this tiny, like Anglo-Protestant, like New Mexican bubble, I'm not getting to know the fullness of God.

### **Greetings from Paul.**

Oh, so I have to say I am actually a fan of Paul, because Paul was radical for his time. So we're talking about the guy that wrote the vast majority of the Christian letters. So Paul was a huge advocate for women in ministry. I know he told a couple to be quiet, but he wasn't telling his own community of women to be quiet. He was telling the hecklers in the crowd. You know, Paul didn't like people interrupting.

I'm a huge fan of Paul, because he expanded who's included in the Kingdom of God. He basically translated Christianity into understanding that other people could get on board with and be like, "Oh, I, I'm down with that, too." Like, "Let's connect and share wisdom and do things together." He also said that people didn't have to be circumcised to be Christian, which, you know, was a game changer! Also that you could eat bacon...also a game changer.

And our text for Sunday about Peter and wherever two or three or more are gathered, and whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven...the idea is that this group that is in covenant with each other. Having power together, collectively, is really important for Paul.

### **You rebuke me for blasphemy?**

Do you get to do that in your church? Is that's like something that women are, like, tasked with in your church? Genuinely curious—like who has the authority to rebuke people for blasphemy? We don't have blasphemy in my church. So I'm like...I we don't have that concept.

### **Do I condemn the action of homosexuality?**

Only if it's abusive and without consent. I condemn the act of *heterosexuality* when it is abusive and without consent, as well. In the way that my religion is organized, we have taken the words "Love one another as yourselves." And we've taken these words of justice and healing and liberation, and taken them to mean that we are to love those who are marginalized by societal norms that are hurtful, including anti-gay and anti-trans legislation. So that's, that's where we come down on it.

Marriage, as we understand it, in the modern era, does not exist in the Bible. So we have to interpret based on other context clues, right—what Jesus might have said. But it's all theoretical. So when Jesus talks about marriage, he's not talking about consensual...a consensual relationship between two consenting adults. Women were considered property. I mean, in some places in the United States, there are people who still see women as objects to like, own. But generally, we see women as full human beings (or we aspire to). Oh, thanks Kaz. And Jesus was celibate. So Jesus chose not to follow the commandment, the first commandment in the Bible, which is "Be fruitful and multiply."

### **Do I believe in the rapture?**

No. I mean, I believe it was, I believe it's a fantastic story, but it was created by an author that is not...it's not in the Bible. I mean, you could take any literature and say, "This is what the Bible is saying." But Jesus never talks about the Rapture.

### **First Ramadan.**

How's that going?

**What's deconstruction?**

So deconstruction is looking at something, whether it's your faith or a belief that you grew up with, and looking at it and saying, "Where did this come from? Where did this idea come from? Is this what I really believe? What does all the evidence point to? What does my experience point to?" And then kind of teasing that apart and saying, "What do I really believe? What of this is authentic to who I am versus what was taught to me or taught to me with the intention of manipulating me?" or whatever.

It's a first step in, in rediscovering faith, I think, for a lot of people, or leaving the church and faith altogether. But for me, deconstruction was a part of rediscovering my faith, because then you rebuild and discover.

**You're curious about reconstruction. It's hard for us to sift through the rubble.**

Yeah. So Chazzal, I would, if you can find a group to do that with, because the deconstruction tends to be like a lot of angst and sadness and grief, and like, "Oh, God, I was lied to." The reconstruction is, is that sorting process. But yeah, it's slow. It's tedious. It's not...and it's not something I'd recommend you do alone.

Yeah, and I think what people forget, too, is that religion is not just a set of beliefs. There's also cultural practices that go along with it, at least for me in Christianity, right? So, baptism, and communion, like our sacraments are part of the culture in which I grew up as well. Like the Christian holidays here, which is now sort of a secular thing as well. But that's, like part of what shaped who I am. The way my family does holidays, which holidays we do together, all of it is part of like our heritage and culture. And so and that's, I mean, you'll see that also, the difference in some different Christian sects, like Catholic Christian culture may be different than Protestant Christian culture. But yeah, it's not just a set of beliefs.

**Is there a Reconstruction group?**

Yeah. And Chazal. Like, send me a message. If you can't find one. I mean, maybe that's something that we could do in the new year. I'm trying to finish my dissertation. That's due April 1. Once that's done, I'll have more time for new projects. And maybe that's what we do here on TikTok is we get some folks together, and we do a reconstruction group, you know, hanging out on Zoom or discord or something and start sifting through the rubble, find faith and community again.

**Renovation is the language that helps you.**

Oh, I like that. I like renovation. I like that a lot.

**You're doing inspirational, not theistic Lent.**

I also like that Aspen. Aspen, are we friends? We should be friends. Okay, we are now.

**You find it so interesting that with separation of church and state, the US still feels Christian.**

Yes. And again, that's cultural. So even though it's only 60%, it's still a majority, but 60% of people in the United States identify as Christian. I wouldn't imagine that all 60% attend worship services on a regular basis or have a relationship with a Christian church. But like 40% of us are not Christian, but the liturgical calendar still shapes school calendars, right, like the schools in New Mexico or in Albuquerque, anyway, are off the week after Easter. Why? Because it's Easter, right? Like we have Christmas break, holiday break. I mean, the other thing is, to be fair, the Christian calendar also follows the harvest calendar in the northern hemisphere. So we also have like... There's going to be a Pagan group celebrating Ostara in our congregation.

### **So do you know how they decide when Easter is?**

I'm just going to tell you, it's the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox.

<technical issues force the live to change locations - I love to my office>  
All right, thank you for your patience.

### **What's my doctrine?**

We are a non doctrinal church. So we have a lot of traditions and history and documents, right? And we do read scripture, but there's not a doctrine that we force everyone to subscribe to.

### **I make you want to go back to church.**

That's awesome. You can visit my church on Zoom if you ever want to. I feel like this is kind of like church to me. This is what I want church to be like, or on Discord or Zoom—where we all like share your wisdom with each other.

### **Do I believe in the Trinity?**

I believe that Trinity is a useful construction. I don't think it's the only way to conceptualize God that's meaningful. @NerdyPriest, who's my doppelganger, is much better at explaining the Trinity. If you're looking for somebody who's like super Trinitarian and gets it in a way that I don't, check her channel out. It's one of my favorites on Tik Tok: @nerdyPriest.

### **Is Jesus the Son of God to me?**

Yeah. But I also believe we are all children of God and the embodiment of the Divine.

### **So do you think that the contemporary church has room for all nontheistics, theistics, and agnostics?**

I agree. And there are several agnostic and atheist members of my church. We also have a couple Pagan members. But we do talk about Jesus and Christianity, the Bible and the life and teachings of Jesus—that's the narrative that shapes how we do our work in the world. That's really at the heart of what we're up to. We do worship and we celebrate God together. And we have a great choir, I love our music program here—it's spectacular. We have a bell choir too, which a lot of churches that our size don't have. We have a ton of fantastic musicians that also just volunteer their time.

But the, the thing that's been consistent for this church from the beginning is that they want to make an impact in the community. They want to make a positive difference. They don't just want to, like, think about the teachings of Jesus, but actually try to live them out—so feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, you know, these, these things that are outlined in the Gospel of Matthew. Of course, it's all aspirational. And we also know that we're flawed. Imperfection is very much celebrated in my church. I think if the service ever went perfectly smoothly, people would feel uncomfortable. The exception is Easter and Christmas, which we rehearse for, you know, forever, but there are still things that go sideways. Also, I have a service dog who is high energy and will add to the chaos if things get too calm.

So yeah, and we welcome kids, we have a table for kids in the back. And we have a little bags with like toys and books and coloring and stuff that kids can take with them to their seats. So kids can stay in worship, and we have two professional nursery care workers. So if people want a break from being with their kids, their kids can go to the nursery, but kids can also just stay and run around and be loud. And that's fine.

**What time is my service?**

It's at 11 o'clock mountain time. So that's one o'clock Eastern. 10 o'clock, if you're in Arizona, or California.

**Oh, you're in Ohio?**

Nice.

**It's not as accepting there.**

I'm sorry to hear that. There are a lot of United Church of Christ churches in Ohio. And some, I mean, if you check their websites look for a rainbow flag. There's, that's kind of my litmus test. If they have a rainbow flag, then they're probably also trans-friendly. They're probably also women-friendly, disability friendly. And if they're not, you can call them on it, and be like, "Hey!" But anyway, there might be some churches near you that are more affirming.

**What's my opinion on the LDS?**

I don't have a lot. I'm still learning more about the Mormon church.

**Am I considered evangelical?**

I mean, I am talking to you all about Jesus on the internet...<laughs> So I feel like that probably makes me evangelical. But in terms of like American Evangelical, what we associate with like, conservative fundamentalist? No.

**You have to go?**

Yeah, it's been really fun. Thank you for joining me, for your sense of humor for all that you bring, your great questions, your wisdom, I always have so much to look up after these lives, because I'm like, "Oh, my gosh, I learned so much from this group!" So yeah. And don't forget to call your representatives! You can call them today and tomorrow, and

remind them that you don't want to TikTko banned. Just call them and say, "Please don't ban Tiktok. It matters to me." That's all you gotta say. And the link's in my bio, if you need to find out how to call them.

I just feel like TikTok is a place where we can really connect and learn from each other. And I know we could figure out how to build that on YouTube or Instagram or somewhere else, but I don't know...or on our own little Discord channels. It's just.. Yeah... Oh, thanks, Kathy. I really...I really feel like I'm a better pastor and a better person because I interact with folks like y'all.

So thank you for enriching my Live and enriching my life!