

Amy: Welcome to A Word Fitly Spoken, a podcast about Jesus, His Word, and our joy in following Him. I'm Amy Spreeman.

Michelle: And I'm Michelle Lesley. Amy, are you ready to talk back? Tonight we've got another episode of Talk Back for you. In our Talk Back episodes, we listen to a sermon, podcast, or other audio from a well known pastor or teacher, and break in with our commentary as we compare his or her teaching with the Word of God.

Amy: If you're a new listener here at AWFS, we also want to let you know that the goal of our Talk Back episodes is to help you learn to listen to teaching discerningly. We want you to be able to think critically and biblically about teachers and materials which claim to be Christian. We're not attacking, slandering, or nit-picking. We love you and we want to help you grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus without being deceived. And Michelle and I prayed a few moments ago that the Lord would watch over our hearts and our mouths as this is a very difficult topic.

Michelle: Tonight, we have the sad duty of bringing you some recent teaching from Alistair Begg. Begg has been the pastor of Parkside Church in Cleveland, Ohio since 1983, more than 40 years. He also heads up his own parachurch teaching ministry, Truth for Life.

Until recently, his Truth for Life broadcasts could be heard on over 1800 Christian radio stations via AFR, American Family Radio. For many years, Alistair Begg has been regarded by millions as a doctrinally sound, trustworthy pastor and teacher.

Amy: And because he has such a stellar reputation for biblical fidelity, it was shocking to recently hear what he had to say this in this Truth for Life video interview, which was actually posted several months ago, in September of 2023, but for some reason, recently went viral on social media in January 2024. And it's about some advice he gave to a grandmother, who asked if she should attend her grandson's upcoming wedding - and either the grandson or the other individual is trans - someone who lives as the opposite gender. Now we need to note that Alistair Begg's stance on homosexual lifestyles and weddings - that hasn't changed and he hasn't gone soft on these folks living in sin and turning their backs on God - it is the counsel to the grandmother that we will focus on tonight. So Let's listen in:

<https://youtu.be/rXDYYPLwgYE?si=uuLzX722Sw1rrmmw&t=1725>

(Starts at 28:45. I think 30:26- "...don't understand that he is a king" is a good stopping point)

transcript of clip -

"...we field questions all the time that go along the lines of my grandson is about to be married to a transgender person and I don't know what to do about this, and I'm calling to ask you to tell me what to do. Which is a huge responsibility.

And in a conversation like that just a few days ago - and people may not like this answer - but I asked the grandmother, "Does your grandson understand your belief in Jesus?"

"Yes."

"Does your grandson understand that your belief in Jesus makes it such that you can't countenance in any affirming way the choices that he has made in life?"

"Yes."

I said, "Well then, okay, as long as he knows that then I suggest that you do go to the ceremony, and I suggest that you buy them a gift."

"Oh!" she said. She was caught off guard. I said, "Well here's the thing, your love for them, may catch them off guard. But your absence will simply reinforce the fact that they said these people are what I always thought: judgmental, critical, unprepared to countenance anything."

And it is a fine line isn't it? It really is, and people need to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. But I think we're going to take that risk, we're going to have to take that risk a lot more if we want to build bridges into the hearts and lives of those who don't understand Jesus and and don't understand that he is a king.)

(Still Amy):

Before we get into the advice, let's pause and talk about just that last sentence, because it's really the overarching theme - the why, and that's a great place to help sharpen our discernment skills. Start with the why rather than the what. The why is - building bridges. But how? By showing the world that we are just like them. We're not weird or critical, We're loving, and we all want the same things. This is called Contextualization, or contextualizing the culture -, You'll see this on the mission field where Christians try to help unbelievers understand God, by using something from their own culture - whether they are muslims, or members of a tribe in Africa. And there are different levels of contextualization models, I believe 5 or six of them, where level one is a great way to do it and we see the Apostle Paul in Acts 17 telling an audience in Athens that he noticed one of their altars with an inscription: 'To the unknown god.' And he basically says, let me proclaim to you who the real God is. And he shares the Gospel with them. Notice he doesn't bow down to that altar along with the crowd, in order to be like them, or to be accepted.. But the other end of the contextualization spectrum is problematic when the message becomes paganized and truth is compromised. The result is a false doctrine. You see that in churches that try to incorporate modern psychology or New Age practices or cultural trends like Critical Race Theory into their theology, This usually happens because we want to be attractional to the unsaved world; we want them to admire us and to think we are loving rather than being all judgy -- and it sounds like that is what might happening here in this context.

Michelle, what do you think?

Michelle: As Christians, we don't base our decisions about things like this on how other people might react or what they might think. That's actually a sin called "the fear of man". It's when we put people's opinions of us ahead of God's opinion of us.

Proverbs 29:25 says: The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.

When it comes to dilemmas like the grandmother's we trust in the Lord, we obey Scripture and base our decisions on what it says, not how someone else might react. That's the only way to be safe. Scripture is our authority, not man.

...banter...

Let's address these points (and whatever others we think of):

- *my grandson is about to be married to a transgender person* - A lot of people writing articles, doing podcasts, on social media, etc., keep referring to this situation as a "gay wedding," a "marriage between two homosexuals," etc. That's a similar situation, and we can talk about similar situations, but *that is not what this was*. It was trans. When we write, comment, podcast on things, we need to be accurate.
- How is it not confusing for your grandchild to "know where you stand" on this issue and then show up with a gift?

Weddings are a *celebration* of holy matrimony. We attend and we *celebrate*. Anyone, pagan or Christian, who knows anything about weddings (and Begg, a pastor who performs them, certainly should) can tell you that by being a non-objecting witness at a wedding, you are making the statement that you support and approve of the union. Why would any pastor suborn the sin of hypocrisy by encouraging a Christian to express disapproval of the union and then turn right around and demonstrate support for the union by joyfully attending the "wedding" with a gift? And, in the future, how is the grandmother, when sharing the gospel with her grandson, to call her grandson to repent of his sin when she has already approved of its codification by attending his "wedding"? More hypocrisy!

- Furthermore, though the grandson may know of the grandmother's biblical disapproval, does his "intended" know? Does the rest of the wedding party, the officiant, and all of the other guests know? Do all of her friends who know she's attending the wedding know? To all of them, many of whom will know she's a professing Christian, her attendance means she approves of the "marriage". (All of these are also reasons [Christians don't attend homosexual "weddings"](#).)
- A few admirers of Begg have expressed their complete confusion about his advice compared to sermons in which his teaching on homosexuality clearly aligned with Scripture. "I don't know why he gave her that advice because he doesn't *believe* that." "He doesn't affirm perversion," etc.

Well, that's exactly what he just did. He affirmed perversion. I don't know what else you would call this debacle, especially since he refuses correction. Jesus said our words and actions reveal what's in our hearts.

The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Luke 6:45

Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. Ja2:18

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; Mt15:8

Wait and see, pray for repentance, sure. But this is what's in his heart -what he believes- right now.

- "She was caught off guard." Of course she was! You're Alistair Begg! Everybody was caught off guard! That should tell *us* something about our own beliefs/behavior. If a bunch of trustworthy, doctrinally sound people freak out when you do something, you'd better give it more thought.

After that video went viral, it was almost a week before anything from Alistair Begg or his Truth for Life ministry responded. And in that time, a lot of people wanted to know if he would recant. Many Christian leaders called for patience and grace -- and prayer, while waiting for this brother to explain.! After all, this is a well-known teacher who has taught sound doctrine for years.

Several preachers went on record about how they would handle such a question. One of those teachers was our friend Justin Peters, who put out a video titled, **Can a Christian Attend a Homosexual/Trans Wedding?**

We have a link in our show notes, but let's play a clip from that presentation, where Justin talks about whether our attendance would be a good witness to others:

((edited/shortened 18:15 - 21:00 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=As7zQMbcefA>

- Cultural fallout 🙌

Amy: Let's talk about the cultural fallout for just a moment - we know that this does great damage to the Kingdom when a well-respected pastor publicly gives unwise counsel - that is what causes division. Not the people who question or express alarm, but those who are teaching something that goes against God's Word. The Apostle Paul says this clearly in Romans 16;17-18: **I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.**

So we are seeing that happening right now in the church, over this topic - But what impact does this have on a watching world? And do these consequences matter?

Listen to what a homosexual author and quote - pastor, Matthew Vines tweeted out. Vines is the

founder of the Reformation Project which seeks to make Bible believing churches bend and open their minds to being gay affirming by using personal stories, experiences and emotional manipulation - by the way, Gay affirming is called being a Reconciling church now - That sounds loving, doesn't it? Vines also wrote the book: God and the Gay Christian a decade ago, and is a leading voice in the movement:



Matthew Vines
@VinesMatthew

...

Alistair Begg, a non-affirming pastor, recently encouraged a grandmother to attend her grandson's same-sex wedding as a way to show him Christ's love.

I'm grateful that—despite significant backlash—Begg has chosen to stand by his advice this week.



From christianpost.com

2:32 PM · Jan 26, 2024 · 15.5K Views

This is exactly what many sisters and brothers in Christ have been pleading with him to understand. That Pagans and God Haters - progressives and others naturally would be very excited by Begg's statements. Now the unheeded warnings of unintended consequences have proven true.

Michelle- One of my social media followers said this:

I'm a mom with a prodigal who might very well find herself in the very situation described. I have preemptively stated in no uncertain terms that I will not attend such an event & why. It has caused a LOT of conflict (& the child is presently living with me, so even worse).

So now I don't even have the backing (for my alleged unloving meanness & bigotry) of supposedly solid folks with public ministries? Okay, I'll go it alone.

*I can't emphasize enough how I am LIVING THIS VERY STORY &
@AlistairBegg
just did the equivalent of abandoning me in the midst of a bloody battle.*

Michelle: Let's move on to the next part of this story;

Shortly after the video of Alistair's remarks began making the rounds, American Family Radio approached the leadership of Truth For Life to clarify Begg's remarks, and to plead with him to repent. Sadly, they were unsuccessful. AFR issued this statement on January 24, 2024:

At American Family Association, we believe it to be an act of unfaithfulness to God to attend a ceremony that celebrates any union outside of the biblical model of marriage as being between one man and one woman. Members of our leadership team held a call with Alistair Begg's team and were unsuccessful in convincing them of his error. As a result of this, we will no longer air Pastor Alistair Begg's Truth for Life program.

... banter ... Some were quick to accuse AFR of "canceling" TFL

Amy: After AFR took Begg's show off the air, and after several days of general backlash and calls to repentance, on Sunday, January 28, Begg finally responded publicly to all of this in a sermon at his church. We've got the links to both the entire sermon and a shorter compilation of the most relevant portions in the show notes, but they're both too long to play for you here, so we'll just give you four moments. I know this will seem like we're picking things out of context, but that is why we do encourage you to listen to the whole thing.

1. He begins his sermon in Luke Chapter 15, opening with the Pharisees grumbling because Jesus was mingling with sinners. So Jesus began to tell the three parables about celebrating the lost sinner who is found, focusing on the prodigal son, a lost sinner who returns home. The father calls for a celebration,, while the older brother sulks and becomes angry. And while it is true that one brother understands grace, the other does not, Pastor Begg makes an interesting comparison of this son to the pharisees in Jesus' audience listening in: "Pharisees" 19:15 - 20:37

(Banter) throughout the sermon he seems to be equating the graceless, self-righteous Pharisees to the people who have questioned him about his counsel to the grandmother.

2. The next clip is where he addresses his comments about encouraging the grandmother to attend the wedding: 22:34 - 23:34 "I won't repent"

Banter. Again, he reiterates that his stance on homosexuality hasn't changed - and it hasn't. That was never in question, but he makes it seem like he is being attacked for going soft. He hasn't. It's all about the counsel.

3. Next, he says he is a product of British evangelism, while taking a swipe at American fundamentalism: 24:10 - 24:38

Banter: American Fundamentalists - those who adhere to the 100 percent truth of Scripture, are the Pharisees.

4. And finally, he brings it back to his advice to the grandmother: 35:30 "We can disagree...Holy Spirit to do the work." 36:42

Banter: The story has changed a bit, and it felt like he was scolding and shaming the Pharisees. But again, attending - bringing a gift, whatever it was, is actually usurping the power of the Holy Spirit. Instead of being convicted, the couple and the guests would feel affirmed by her being there.

grandmother sitting there in the front row with the gift of a bible on her lap - that's new. In the initial interview video, not only does he not mention taking a Bible as the gift, but he also says it's a grandSON. In the response sermon, he says it's a grandDAUGHTER.

Michelle: So, Amy, one of the main points we've talked about tonight is that Begg needs to repent of this horribly unbiblical advice he gave this woman. But he seems not to understand *why* he needs to repent, and maybe some of our listeners need a little clarity on that as well, so let's do what we do and take it back to Scripture. And I want to start off with James 3:1, and view all of the other Scriptures we're about to discuss through that lens. James 3:1 says:

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

The advice Alistair Begg gave the grandmother is pastoral malpractice, and is the very reason God included James 3:1 in His Word - to rightly put a healthy fear of the Lord into pastors and, by extension, any of us who teach God's Word. God places on our shoulders an *enormous* responsibility to handle His Word correctly.

We do not teach people to make decisions based on our personal opinions about someone's anticipated reaction. We teach them to obey Scripture *regardless* of what we, or they, think the outcome will be. And in this case Scripture tells us:

- Marriage is between one man and one woman Genesis 2:20-24:

The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

- *Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.* Hebrews 13:4

- We're not to be ashamed of the gospel – a major component of which is “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” ([Romans 1:16-18](#)) – rather, we're to be willing to shed our own blood for obedience to Scripture ([Hebrews 12:4](#)). Compromising with sin is one form of being ashamed of the gospel.
- We're to abstain from even the appearance of evil. ([1 Thessalonians 5:22](#))
- Jesus did not come to bring peace between pagans and Christians, but a sword, and anyone who puts loyalty to family ahead of loyalty to Jesus and His Word is not worthy of Him: *I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* Matthew 10:34-39
- Romans 1:32- Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

If even pagans aren't to give approval to sin, how much less are Christians to give approval to sin?

- *are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?... I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.* 1 Corinthians 10:18-21
- *Do not...take part in the sins of others;* 1 Timothy 5:22
- Ephesians 5:5-17 (an excerpt):

For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral...has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things [like sexual immorality] the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret...15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

- *He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.* Proverbs 17:15

...banter...

Amy: One final point we'd like to mention in this whole thing is that some people seem to think that this is the first misstep Alistair Begg has ever made. It's not. There have been a couple of other instances we'd like to note.

Michelle: That's right, Amy, this is not Begg's first rodeo. I maintain a list of pastors and Bible teachers I recommend over at my blog, and Begg used to be on that list, but I removed him about a year and a half ago - I didn't warn against him or say he was a false teacher or anything, I was just no longer willing to say, "Hey this is a great teacher you should go listen to." - and I did that because of these two incidents that we're going to briefly mention. You can find out more by going to the show notes and clicking on the link for my blog article about Begg.

First, one of my followers brought it to my attention that Alistair Begg endorses the idea of a woman preaching or teaching the Sunday morning message in church (in other words, preaching/teaching to men) as long as she has been invited and given permission to do so by the pastor and elders. He has invited and permitted at least one woman to do this at his own church. This is unbiblical.

We all do dumb things from time to time, and well known pastors are no exception, but Begg's statements in that sermon were not a one time lapse in judgment. They are the well thought out, planned, and implemented *policy* of the church *he pastors*.

...banter if needed...

Amy: Some of our listeners may also recall that in 2019, Begg shared the stage with [Beth Moore](#) (also [Tony Evans](#), a female pastor, and others) at [Baylor University's National Preaching Conference](#), much to the chagrin of his followers. This was a conference where pastors and seminary students were instructed on being better pastors by two women! As with the transexual wedding issue we've discussed tonight, there were numerous protests from his followers prior to the event.

In response to a follower who expressed concern, a [statement](#)¹ from Begg's ministry indicated that he accepted the invitation to speak without knowing who any of the other speakers were. Despite the urging of many who loved and admired him, Begg kept the speaking engagement.

...banter if needed...

Michelle: Alistair Begg is not a new Christian or a young pastor who made a rookie mistake. The question of whether or not to attend a transexual wedding should be a no-brainer for *any* Christian, let alone a seasoned pastor with many decades of experience and a world-wide public ministry. Counseling a sheep to base her behavior on a sinner's opinions and feelings rather than

to submit to and obey God's clear Word belies a foundational problem with his theology as do all of his other errors and mishandlings of Scripture that we've covered tonight . And because of that, unfortunately, I believe we will continue to see Begg make these kinds of blatant errors in the future.

Amy: So, in conclusion, we are going to have to wrestle with these moments in the culture we are in, and again, we share this to help you stand on Biblical truth, not to slander or nitpick, or as some have said, crucify a brother. We're not doing that, nor are we telling you what to think or how YOU should regard this pastor. Because we're going to see more of this division in the Church - just as Jesus said would happen - over cultural matters, which are really Biblical issues at heart.. Not that it matters what I think or Michelle thinks, or where we land. For what it is worth, here's where I land. Alistair Begg is still a brother in Christ who has given egregious counsel. He is not someone I recommend for that reason, but I'm also not looking at him with disdain, or mocking or scoffing - that would be sinful. So I need to look at him with love - I will continue to lift him up in prayer - I do think it would be a powerful thing if he would turn this around and say that his counsel was not biblical. But not recommending a teacher does not equal crucifying a man. He is not a heretic or an apostate - just a teacher who gave some very unbiblical advice. Ladies, you may view this differently, but Michelle, we want to make sure that at least we are thinking biblically based on God's Word and not emotions. What do you think? Banter

Michelle- As I said, I stopped recommending him about a year and a half ago. I have a red/yellow/green light system. Don't consider him a false teacher. Not questioning his salvation. He could still repent. We need to learn from what he's done wrong and apply it to our own lives. Bible stories/real life examples like this are God's grace to us. Be teachable, repentant.

Amy: Thank you for joining us tonight on this sad but necessary Talk Back episode of AWFS. We'd like to say thank you so much to Ronda for her kindness in being a regular donor on PayPal. And if this ministry has been a blessing to you and you'd like to support us like Ronda does, on PayPal, or by regular monthly giving at Patreon, just go to AWFS.Life and click on the support tab.

Michelle: We'd also like to thank one of our listeners who goes by EWei10 over on Apple podcasts for leaving us a 5 star rating and this encouraging review:

Wisdom and Encouragement

I discovered this podcast several months ago and have been binge-listening ever since! These ladies have so much wisdom and share it in an encouraging way. They aren't just giving their opinions, but back up everything with Scripture. After listening to them, I can articulate various doctrines and beliefs much better, and know where to go in Scripture to learn more. Thank you for boldly and lovingly speaking the truth!

Thank you so much for your kind words and for listening to AWFS. And we'd like to encourage all of our listeners, if you love AWFS, let us hear from you! Leave us a 5 star rating and an encouraging comment on your favorite podcast platform.

Amy: And until next time, talk back to false teaching, and walk worthy.