

Objections to Christianity

Group 2

5/20/2013 8:00 PM

Austin TX

(0:00:00.0-0:03:21.0) INTRODUCTIONS . . . TELL US ABOUT YOUR LIFE.

Susan: I had to laugh when they called me, because they called a Jewish chick to talk about Christianity. *(Laughter.)* This is the first time they've called me, so I was just like, "Really?" *(Laughter.)* The first one you call me is about Christianity?" *(Laughter.)* I'm single. I work for the state. I have a cat and four birds, and my birds bully my cat. It's kind of sad. *(Laughter.)*

(0:03:57.9) WHAT DO YOU DO FOR THE STATE?

Susan: I work with disability termination services.

(0:04:04.1) YOU'RE BUSY WITH FAMILIES OF EVERY KIND?

Susan: Yes. I work at a computer, but they're people.

(0:04:13.3) IT'S STILL PEOPLE?

Susan: Yes.

Amelia: I'm an ESL teacher so I teach adults, which is fun. I'm doing it through AmeriCorps, which is like the domestic peace corp. That's me. Single. I graduated from college a couple of years. I have some family in Austin. I'm really interested in this study because religion fascinates me. I used to be really involved in the church, and then some things happened, and now I'm the opposite, and so that's interesting for me.

Katelyn: I do a lot of things right now. I work at a couple of different things. I'm in music and art, and I work at a bakery. I'm at that point in life where I know I need to be a grown-up, but I really don't want to be so I'm just enjoying it as it is right now. I studied archaeology in school. Emphasis on religion, because it fascinated me, all forms of it. I am not religious myself, but I find them all fascinating. What else do I do?

(0:05:38.0) YOU GO HOME TO A CAT?

Katelyn: I don't have a pet. I should have a pet, but I live in a very small apartment and it would be mean to fit a pet. I actually take care of my friends' dogs during the day while they're at work. I go and walk them. Something for me to do and the dogs enjoy it too. *(Laughter.)*

Courtney: Hi, I'm from Austin. I'm a Program Director at a treatment center for youth on probation. I have a second program that's truancy prevention for at-risk kids also. What else? I love to travel. I'm gay. I have a partner.

(0:06:23.5) YOU LIVE WITH YOUR PARTNER?

Courtney: She's about to move in in two weeks.

Female Respondent: Congratulations. *(Several respondents agreed.)*

Courtney: Thank you. We'll see how it goes. What else? I don't know. I'm a total foodie. I love to eat and drink and everything to do like that.

(0:06:41.8) YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT CITY. *(Laughter.)*

Courtney: Yes, I know. My gosh. Every time I turn around they're bringing more food my way. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing but it's a lot of fun. I love music. I don't know. That's pretty much everything. Yes.

Stephanie: I bartend downtown. I'm studying psychology. I took some time off from school. I need to get back on it. Time goes fast in Austin. *(Laughter.)* I live in a creative co-op, emphasis on all different types of creativity in art and music, which is really great. It's a challenge, but it really builds up a lot of great skills. I'm interested. I'm very spiritual. I don't really agree with institutionalized religions, but it's very interesting to me a lot of how different people interpret different things and how similar a lot of them really are.

Denise: Hi, I've lived in Austin since '97. I lived in Houston until '92 and I traveled from '92 to '97. At the tender age of forty I decided to get married and have a child, so I'm currently a stay-at-home mom. I know, right. *(Laughter.)* All my friends see their children in high school and they're looking at the bright light. Their kids are about to leave and I'm like, "Yes. You're a toddler." *(Laughter.)*

(0:08:25.6) YOU DID IT YOUR WAY.

Denise: Right. This was interesting to me because first of all I learned the term de-churched. *(Laughter.)* I'd never heard that term before. *(Laughter.)* It makes sense. I used to go to church three times a week. That's how I was raised. I absolutely do not regret it. I'm still spiritual, but it just doesn't really apply to me anymore. Nothing happened; I just changed with age.

Kelly: I'm from south Texas and lived here for a long time, went to school here, moved around a bit, and now I'm an event planner for the state in child nutrition and school meals. I get yelled at a lot about school meals. *(Laughter.)* I'm good at that.

(0:09:18.1) YOU DO SCHOOL MEALS AND YOU'RE AN EVENT PLANNER?

Kelly: Yes.

(0:09:20.9) YOU DO EVENT PLANNING ON THE SIDE?

Kelly: No.

(0:09:23.1) YOU DO THAT FOR THE STATE?

Kelly: Yes.

(0:09:24.8) THEY STUCK YOU WITH SCHOOL MEALS?

Kelly: That's (0:09:27.9 *unclear/crosstalk*). (*Laughter.*)

Female Respondent: That is awesome.

Kelly: Yes, I know. It's good. That's just my title. It's really more meetings. It's not quite as fun. (*Laughter.*)

(0:09:46.8) WHEN YOU GO HOME YOU GO HOME . . . ?

Kelly: I live alone in a little efficiency downtown. I just sold my car last year so I could walk around more and for all the many good reasons. Yes, I love it. I thought it would only last six months, but it's almost a year.

(0:10:06.1) DID YOU WALK OVER?

Kelly: I missed the stops; I walked across the bridge, which was lovely. (*Laughter.*)

Cassandra: I'm actually not originally from Texas. I'm from California. I moved here three years ago. I love Austin. I'm very happy to be here. I'm married and I have two cats.

(0:10:30.6) AND WHAT?

Cassandra: I have two cats.

(0:10:31.7) YOU HAVE TWO CATS?

Cassandra: I work from home. I'm a recruiter. As far as religion goes, I'm not religious at all. I don't really believe in organized religion. I have a very wide background in terms of my family as far as . . . (0:10:47.6 *unclear*).

(0:10:48.4) YOU'RE GOING TO EXPAND YOUR FAMILY SHORTLY?

Cassandra: I'm pregnant. (*Laughter.*) We're having a boy at the end of July.

Female Respondent: Congratulations. (*Several respondents agreed.*)

Bobbie: I'm a special ed teacher, elementary. Let's see. I live at home with my partner and he wants to get married. I'm just fine the way that I am so I'm going to postpone as long as I can, but I love him. We have, let's see, a dog, two cats, two snakes, a couple hermit crabs, and that's it.

(0:11:47.9) WHAT KIND OF SNAKES?

Bobbie: I have a ball python and I have a corn snake.

Lauren: I'm originally from the Northeast. I was interested by the study just because you hear so often people will say, "I'm spiritual but not religious," (*one respondent agreed*) and it's just that I feel like more people say that than anything. That's interesting. I'm an educational consultant, which I think a lot of people are in education here. (*Several respondents agreed.*) (*Laughter.*) In my free time I spend a lot of time with friends and outside with my dog. Austin is the perfect place to do both those things.

(0:12:33.9) WHAT KIND OF DOG DO YOU HAVE?

Lauren: She's a Catahoula.

(0:12:49.5-0:13:51.6 MODERATOR EXPLAINS GOAL OF FOCUS GROUP.)

(0:13:51.6) WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS WHEN I SAY CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH AND JESUS?

Female Respondent: The term organized religion.

(0:14:01.2) SOMETHING ELSE THEN?

Female Respondent: Mm-hmm. (*Affirmative.*)

Female Respondent: I just . . . yuck. (*Laughter.*)

Female Respondent: That connotation with all of that. (*Laughter.*)

(0:14:14.5) BECAUSE IT EVOKES FEELINGS OF WHAT?

Female Respondent: Just disbelief. I guess that's the best way to put it. There's so many words.

(0:14:26.1) YOU SAID SOMETHING SIMILAR?

Courtney: Yes. I have a negative connotation with all of those words. I guess I feel like they might try to recruit me or the place might go up in flames when I walk through the door. I guess judgment and all that. (*Two respondents agreed.*)

Katelyn: Being from Texas I often associate those words with extremists. Though I know that that's not the case—I have lots of friends who are Christian and that go to church every Sunday—but those words generally tell me the extremist view. Extremists of all religions are terrifying to me. It almost invokes fear in me.

Female Respondent: It's interesting to hear yours, because mine is almost the opposite because when I think of it I think of a lot of my former friends because I used to be involved in the church. A lot of my former friends are more like, I don't know, medium-tempered Christians. That was my experience with it, so I think of them. My first reaction is like, "Oh, my old friends. I wonder how they're doing." It was a part of my past so it's almost close to me, but part of me is also because of my history with it, it's like half ick, half I could understand it.

(0:15:38.9) WHAT DO YOU MEAN FORMER FRIENDS?

Female Respondent: Yes. I lost some friends in the process.

(0:15:48.5) NOBODY ELSE THOUGHT THAT?

Female Respondent: I did. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Whenever I start hearing terms like that, part of me goes on the defensive, because it's really interesting sometimes when you say you're Jewish. People try to convert you and it's like, "Okay, met the guy. Not interested. Thank you."

Female Respondent: People try to convert you when you're not Jewish, too. *(Laughter.) (Several respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: Yes, but it sometimes, it depends on my contacts, but part of me goes on the defensive because I feel like I have to defend myself. Obviously, there are those really nice people so I have to calm down.

(0:16:37.4) ANYTHING DIFFERENT FROM THIS SIDE OF THE ROOM?

Female Respondent: I would say I have a dual opinion of those two terms. One is pushy and unrespectful because growing up I just felt like I was pushed into going to church or whatever. My opinion was respected in what I wanted to do, but I also now know a lot of people who are Christian who are great people and I do respect. They don't have a problem with the fact that I'm not *(laughs)* religious. My past history with it is really negative, but now I think it's not as negative as it used to be just because I've met people who were a lot more tolerant of other people and their opinions. *(Laughs.)*

(0:17:31.7) YOU WANTED TO SAY?

Female Respondent: I have a little bit of a negative connotation towards it, but I was raised Catholic, and so when people ask me religious questions or whatever I tell them I was raised. I don't say that I'm Catholic necessarily. In high school I switched from a Catholic school to a public school and the area that I grew up in was largely Christian. It was just like all of a sudden they, even though being Catholic is part of being a Christian and such, they would definitely act like . . . if there's less Catholics there and they just were giving me grief about it. You know what I mean? Not really *(0:18:19.0 unclear)* but definitely being pushy and stuff. It's just weird for me because even I was raised Catholic and we never addressed the situation of being like the difference between being Catholic and a normal Christian or whatever.

You know what I mean? But as soon as I got to high school it was peers that were like, “You’re not Christian. You’re Catholic.” It’s like, “Okay?” There was a lot of evangelical Christian groups at school.

Female Respondent: We’ll call those the evil Southern Baptists. *(Laughter.)* Because there are great Southern Baptists that you drink beer with *(one respondent agreed)* and then there are the evil ones that you just want to get away from.

(0:19:03.9) BAPTISTS ARE CHRISTIANS, RIGHT?

Female Respondent: Yes.

Female Respondent: Last time I looked. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: I have no idea.

(0:19:08.0) THEY THROW THEM IN THERE?

Female Respondent: I didn’t even separate Catholicism from Christianity.

(0:19:15.9) WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CHRISTIANITY IN TOTAL, WHAT’S THE FIRST THING THAT YOU THINK OF, AND HOW DID YOU GET THERE?

Female Respondent: I hadn’t even really thought about it like that, but I don’t have a bad connotation of the word Christianity. I have a bad connotation with the word Christians. Christianity to me is just an overarching religion and group of people that believes in Jesus.

(0:20:03.1) WHERE DID YOU LEARN THAT?

Female Respondent: Preschool and Methodist church. *(Laughter.)*

(0:20:12.3) SOMEBODY ELSE ON CHRISTIANITY?

Female Respondent: I think the idea of Christianity is fantastic. *(One respondent agreed.)*

(0:20:17.0) THAT IDEA IS?

Female Respondent: Just the basis behind it of do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It’s a great basis. It’s the people. It’s just the Christians that pick little pieces to back up what they’re trying to promote on you. But the idea of Christianity is a very nice one. It actually follows most religions. They all kind of follow the same line. The word Christianity itself to me is not a negative or fear-inducing word. It’s a nice idea—if only people would follow it how it’s supposed to be followed.

(0:20:47.9) SOMEBODY ELSE ON CHRISTIANITY?

Female Respondent: I feel like I do see a lot of negativity in Christianity even more than I would see necessarily about Christians. Because Christianity to me, I feel like, is very stifling and it’s not very open, and it was almost designed to be a group of people to go against a lot of other types of faiths. I think a

lot of times Christianity is just this overarching thing that is almost like something to be scared of because of what the Christian church has done. It's isolated a lot of people how it breeds hate and intolerance and fear. You're teaching children that if you mess up, you go to hell. *(One respondent agreed.)* You're teaching people to help other people so that you don't go to hell and to ostracize people. I think when you go into a place that Christianity is the major influence, it's not that everyone is super nice and sweet and friendly and living the way that Jesus taught you. I don't think that Jesus really even has that much to do with Christianity now. I think that a lot of times it's judgment, and that people who have nowhere else to go to answer these questions, instead of looking inside themselves, they look for authority in the church. I think that it gives people an excuse to be hateful to other people and to feel like they're better than them. Whether it be all across the board, I feel like . . . And the rules of how they treat women, too, it's very overwhelming and I think that's why Christianity almost seems like this dark cloud to me when I hear it.

Female Respondent: I agree. I'm sorry. I agree. *(Laughter.)* Even more than that, growing up in middle school I went to visit my dad in Boston when he lived in Boston. My parents are divorced. Beautiful, gorgeous churches that I absolutely hated walking into *(one respondent agreed)* because why the hell does the church need these beautiful churches when they're supposed to be taking care of people? You don't need some gigantic place that costs loads of money when you should be giving that money to people and taking care of your people. I've just always thought of the church as a big source of hypocrisy.

(0:23:22.0) HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU REMEMBER THAT FIRST TIME WHERE YOU WERE, LIKE, "THAT COULD BE SOMETHING THAT HELPED A PERSON"?

Female Respondent: Pre-teen probably.

(0:23:31.0) PRE-TEEN?

Female Respondent: Yes.

(0:23:49.5) IF EVERYBODY AGREED, WE'D BE DONE WITH THIS DISCUSSION AND GO HOME.

Female Respondent: I agree, but I expand. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: The concept of Christianity is very oppressive and it pisses me off most days. Individual Christians, I have several friends who are Christians and I love them.

(0:24:19.4) TELL ME ABOUT THE OPPRESSIVENESS PART.

Female Respondent: Christmas we get four days off for. For my highest holy days I have the option of taking time off, but they're a given for Christmas. It's like, "Really?" We have a Passover Seder. There are people who are out there Christianizing our Seder. It's like, "Leave our holiday alone. Get your own. You've already hijacked other peoples. Leave ours." Because the Seder is my favorite holiday. Passover is

one of our highest holy days, and for someone to hijack it and assign the symbolism there to Jesus is just like, “No.”

(0:25:13.0) YOU’RE OFFENDED THAT CHRISTIANITY IS CO-OPTING YOUR RELIGION?

Female Respondent: Yes. They do that all the time. It’s like being Messianic Jews. You’re not Jews; you’re Christians. *(Laughter.)* Don’t . . . No. You can’t be Jewish. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I see where you’re all going and I think the Christian’s confused. I like the word you said that it’s hypocritical. I’m confused; I don’t think there is a single definition for Christianity because there’s so many different religions that didn’t work. Is it Catholic or is it Christian? It’s just so confused. They’re hypocritical. They preach one thing, like I’m going to say the principle behind it is supposed to be good and mean forgiveness. That’s not what you see most of the time.

(0:26:17.5) LET’S TAKE ON THE CHRISTIANS?

Female Respondent: It depends on the Christian. *(Laughter.)*

(0:26:36.7) TELL ME ABOUT AN EXPERIENCE YOU’VE HAD WITH A CHRISTIAN THAT HELPED DISTILL HOW YOU SEE CHRISTIANS.

Female Respondent: It’s changed over the course of me growing up and such, but now I think I find myself a little bit frustrated with the incorporation of the politics in Christians. People just following because of their church or of their upbringing or whatever that they identify to their church. It’s just frustrating let that interact with, I don’t know, politics. I’m from the Northeast . . .

Female Respondent: Yes. It was big.

Female Respondent: When I moved here, too, it’s like it’s also largely a lot bigger church Christian crew.

(0:27:27.2) IN THE NORTHEAST?

Female Respondent: Mm-hmm. *(Affirmative.)* I think in terms of politicians and stuff. I grew up in a democratic state.

Female Respondent: Even the question before, I don’t have so much of a theoretical or historical or an argument. I think it’s very emotional for me, maybe because of experiences. I lump all religious people of any kind together. I don’t really separate Christianity from any other, I’ll say, at least Western faith. To me it’s all negative. I guess for me, just because of my own perspective, I really don’t judge anybody else. I’m not against the Christians. Believe what you want. I don’t dislike someone because of their faith. I probably do stay away from them because of my experiences, but even with God, I have a negative association with even the word God. I don’t even care for that. I don’t care for that. In response to what you’re saying, I don’t know if it was exactly a Christian or some other Western faith. I think I’ve had many negative experiences with religious people but one of them in particular, and it’s very vivid in my mind. When I was about fourteen, I was walking down the street with my girlfriend holding hands.

We stopped and sat down on a curb. We're having a discussion or whatever. I had a really tough upbringing. Some lady came around the corner in a Suburban and was screaming out of her window, "You're going to hell," and cursing at us every profanity and got about two inches from us in her Suburban and tried to run me over. F-you and you're disgusting and all these things. You're going to hell. I realize it's a very dramatic example. I feel like even on a much smaller level most religious people have those thoughts even if they don't act on them to that extreme. That's just one example, but I'm just saying. My family is all very religious. They think I'm the one who has gone astray and they keep telling me I'm going to be saved one day. The clouds are going to open up and I'm going to find my true self. Honestly I will. *(Laughter.)* I appreciate whenever they tell me I'm praying for you. I say, "Thank you very much. I need all the prayers I can get." I don't know that I believe in all of that, but it couldn't hurt.

(0:29:54.8) WHAT WERE YOU GOING TO SAY?

Amelia: Good question. *(Laughter.)*

(0:30:15.0) YOU SAID, FOR ME?

Amelia: My perspective of, first Christianity, is more of a historical perspective as opposed to just experiences. I view Christianity as negative just based on the experience. Then when I think of Christians it's very, very different. The way I do Christians is by experience just because I see Christianity as this big idea that hypnotizes people, but I see Christians as, you're people. You're just being hypnotized. Poor you. I think of a lot of my friends, like I said, and I think one of the biggest memories I have is really with my current boss right now. He's Christian and he really is just a great person. I really like him. He's probably one of the most, I don't know, respectful people that I've ever met and so that is confusing right now because I'm like, "What?"

(0:31:19.0) BECAUSE HE'S A CHRISTIAN, BUT THEN HE SEEMS LIKE A GOOD PERSON?

Amelia: Yes. He's not pushy about his religion, but maybe it's just because it's a work thing. I don't know. Something about him is very good, bright, and neat. Anyways, so my overall experience with Christians, at least in my life, has been pretty positive overall. To me it's the idea of Christianity and what potential it has and what it's already done that really bugs me.

(0:31:50.7) HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT CHURCH?

Female Respondent: I don't know if I've become jaded, because up until a year ago I worked at Dell for ten years, so I just think about it's to make money. It's just to make money. You were talking about seeing these amazing beautiful churches. I have to say I grew up in a church that's very modest and I still go from time to time when I go home. It's extremely modest and I just think that's wonderful. Organized religion, making money, I just see it as a way of making money and fill other people's pockets. Because I see a whole lot more than just the church I grew up in. You go see Catholic churches and it's shocking. Not just Catholic; it's a bunch of churches.

Female Respondent: I think they're beautiful. They don't disgust me as far as architecture and history and whatnot if you think about the history of it. But just the structure, fabulous. Even still, if I go home and go back to church which is very rare, like Christmas or whatever, it will still be moving to me whether or not I believe what they're saying. All of the religions are based on the same principles of good values, and I think that's always a moving and beautiful thing. The rest of it (0:33:13.5 unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: Doesn't it affect you that all the religions don't practice that?

Female Respondent: Yes. Totally.

Female Respondent: Saying that okay, we're all similar and we should all just . . .

Female Respondent: Right. That's why I don't understand why anybody believes in any one because they're all doing the same thing. (*Several respondents agreed.*)

Stephanie: I think that's me, too, especially within Christianity. We were talking about the difference between the way people treat you when you were Catholic and the difference from Protestant. I was actually raised Catholic at first. My mom because a born again, so I was ready to cross fire. Catholicism being evil and with the churches, the churches and Catholic faith are very ritualistic. They borrow a lot from pagan culture, and so that's one of the reasons a lot of born again are against who are Protestant say that about the Catholic church a lot too. It's overindulgent and that it just has so many societal implications to it. I think that a lot of times within the church, how it's practiced, that can be a huge range of things depending on what church you go to and what brand of religion, what subgroup in Christianity that you're talking about. I think it is because it still is a community-run thing that that's why it's so important to know who's actually running it. Some churches preach more about love and being a good person. One of my best friends became Christian and she was having dreams and she called me up. She knew that I knew she wasn't practicing anymore. She found this really good church that really preaches those things that all religions are supposed to practice but don't. You can go into some churches that are very strict. The church I grew up, you couldn't be gay or that church would have kicked you out.

(0:35:04.2) YOU COULDN'T HAVE A WHAT?

Stephanie You couldn't be gay at all or they would kick you out. Then there are some churches where we just accept everyone. That's cool.

(0:35:13.5) WHAT KIND OF CHURCH DID YOU GROW UP IN?

Stephanie: Catholic and then it was nondenominational Christian.

(0:35:20.9) IN TEXAS?

Stephanie: No. Massachusetts.

(0:35:23.0) MASSACHUSETTS?

Stephanie: Yes.

Female Respondent: That's interesting because I grew up in a Baptist church, Southern Baptist church, but it was in the city. We loved everyone. No one ever could possibly get kicked. We had gay people. It was funny because I know I grew up Southern Baptist, but we liked everybody. I had no idea that we were supposed to dislike other people. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Better in the city.

Female Respondent: I think a lot of it does have to do with *(one respondent agreed)* city versus rural. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: It's also just which particular church leader is choosing which passage he wants to take or choose everything is going to be around that one. The Jewell serpent handlers. They found one thing about if you can handle serpents, then you're mighty, so they take stakes and say, "Oh look, I'm mighty." Honestly, it blows my mind because you can find direct passages in the Bible contradicting the things that they're preaching. *(Two respondents agreed.)* It totally depends on the church. I do have friends who I'm actually a little jealous of their church friends and their community because they have these awesome friends. It's all about love and tolerance. But then you get those crazies out there. Those are the church leaders and they are essentially hypnotizing the members, their sheep, if you will, following blindly.

(0:36:46.4) THE MEMBERS ARE SHEEP?

Female Respondent: Yes.

Female Respondent: When you say the church, I'm caught between thinking of the movie *Dogma* *(laughter)*, which is funny as hell *(laughter)* and also the new pope, who I am impressed by. I loved when he was walking down. He got out of his car. He kissed a disabled man. He kissed a baby. He's just so humble. He's impressing me and that's like, "Okay, great," because the last pope, we weren't really best friends. *(One respondent agreed.)* I'm adjusting to how the pope affects us Jews, but he does.

(0:37:26.4) YOU SAID YOU'RE TORN?

Female Respondent: Thinking about those two things and just thinking about how the church is this big thing that you can make fun of, and how it's weird when a pope kisses a disabled man that's headline news. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: It even affects some people. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: That's what he's supposed to do. I can't remember who was saying it earlier, the riches and everything. I can't remember who was talking about it, but the money they spend and the grandeur that the Vatican also has historical context and stuff.

Female Respondent: Can I just add one more thing, because no one mentioned the pedophilia yet. *(Laughter.)* If Catholics are *(0:38:18.8 unclear/crosstalk)* church because there was a whole horrifying other side. On one hand I think of the church I grew up in, not so scary, but the church is more scary.

(0:38:33.1) INSTITUTION VERSUS ACTUAL BUILDING?

Female Respondent: Yes. *(Several respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I think that any of these churches, it's a business. It's political. That's all it is to me.

Female Respondent: Some of the churches, I think one positive experience I've had with the church is being in the social work field. Some of the churches are so charitable whether it's out of guilt or pressure or obligation or whatever, the bottom line is when I have a family who has an ex-offender parent and I cannot get any shelter to take them in or feed them or do anything, it will be a church at the end of the day that will say, "We'll take him in." I think that's one thing that I feel guilty about. I consider myself not a judgmental person about anything unless you're religious and then I have that feeling. I don't judge what you believe, but I don't want to be near you. I don't really reach out. I will reach out to any community partner for my kids or the families, whatever they need, but when it comes to that I have to call the church, I don't want to do it, but then when they prove me wrong or right . . .

(0:39:36.4) WHEN THEY SAY YES?

Female Respondent: Yes. *(Laughter.)* When they say yes I'm like, "Okay, maybe I need to cut them a break." Then it makes me think within the church or even in the world. I guess I can be idealistic, but I think we all want to have a life of meaning and feel good about the way we spend our time on earth. Some people maybe are . . . like you were saying, misguided in the way that they're trying to do that or caught up in an idea whether it's an institution or following a certain leader. You see it in political movements. You see it in religious movements. *(One respondent agreed.)* That's like you were saying—just that search outside of yourself to try to find the right use of your life force, of your energy.

(0:40:23.4) WHAT DO YOU THINK WHEN I TALK ABOUT JESUS?

Female Respondent: Seems like a good man. *(Two respondents agreed.)* The things that I learned about him in the school, my very, very nonreligious school at Texas State. I was an archaeologist. We had to learn about all of the religions. I had probably the most spiritual teacher ever. He would use passages for things and then he would tell us how to disprove whatever is in this religion. If he was an actual person, he seems like a really good dude who just was trying to help people. The church has taken him on as their business prop. But if he was, in fact, a real person then he seems like a pretty good guy to me and tried to help people.

(0:41:20.3) SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

Female Respondent: I do think he was a real person, but I don't know that you could say he was the messiah.

(0:41:27.4) THE MESSIAH?

Female Respondent: Yes.

(0:41:28.9) YOU WHISPERED IT?

Female Respondent: *(Laughter.)* Usually there's crashing symbols. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Lightning is going to strike. *(One respondent agreed.) (Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: I find it really frustrating when I think about the idea of Jesus. My first reaction is just like, "Ahh," mostly because I get a lot of different feelings because I used to be invested in that. That used to be something I really believed in, and Jesus was alive and it was awesome. I remember that and then I think about where I am now and I'm like, "How can that change so drastically? How could I be such the opposite side of the fence?" I just ignore that topic. I ignore Jesus. I don't even know if it's real or not. It doesn't really matter much anymore because it's not applicable, but it used to be so meaningful. It's really confusing to me. Now it's I don't really know.

(0:42:23.2) WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS?

Female Respondent: I have a lot to say. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: That all comes back to the organized religion thing, because they put together the whole New Testament so there's some stories that are kept in and some stories that were kicked out. *(One respondent agreed.)* I think some of the real history is in there. I just don't think we have all of the story.

Female Respondent: Miracles of religion.

Female Respondent: You're talking . . .

(0:42:53.8) HOW ABOUT LAUREN AND THEN SUSAN?

Female Respondent: I'm sorry.

Female Respondent: That's okay. That's okay.

Lauren: I think like you. Everybody usually does a better job relating to experiences. We're talking about our experiences and stuff and I think a lot of how people used to convey meaning in life or whatever would tell these stories and such. I think a lot of that, and it's just like any good storyteller would add a little oomph in it and you won't believe what he did next. *(Laughter.)* You know what I mean? Then people remember it. I think that for the most part people want a traction with their life and they want some guidance *(one respondent agreed)*, and I think that that's where a lot of that comes in. That's my view. He was probably this awesome guy and did a lot of good and then it went on from there, like snowballed.

(0:43:46.8) HE WAS A GUY?

Female Respondent: Yes.

(0:43:48.2) HE DID LIVE? THERE WAS A JESUS PERSON?

Female Respondent: (0:43:52.0 Unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: He may have been created from several different people.

Female Respondent: It was interesting what you were saying because the Old Testament, basically they took the Torah, they rearranged it.

(0:44:10.1) WHO IS THEY?

Female Respondent: The people who made the Christian Bible, the New Testament.

(0:44:13.2) WHO ARE THEY?

Female Respondent: I have no idea. (One respondent agreed.)

Female Respondent: (0:44:18.1 unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: I think the Catholic church back hundreds of years ago. (One respondent agreed.)

Female Respondent: Whatever schmucks did it. (Laughter.) (One respondent agreed.) They rearranged it because when you read the end of (0:44:28.7 unclear) it talks about Moses. There's not going to be another prophet like him. They changed the end of it to talk about this mythical messiah to fit the Jesus theory. Jesus may have been a real man, but if you notice he didn't say he was the Son of God. He didn't say a lot. I think it's really interesting that the New Testament was largely written by people who didn't even know him. I think there was one person that kind of knew him that wrote that stuff. Paul acted like the greatest PR person ever, and every company should have a PR person like Paul. He sold the Jesus theory. To me, Jesus is this guy who lived and then they wanted to create a religion around him and so they changed the end of what they call the Old Testament, the Torah, and built this new religion. I don't know if Jesus actually approves of it and it's going to be interesting in the world to come when all these people have to face him and he's like, "Yes, I never said any of that and that didn't happen like that. I was Jew, so . . ."

(0:45:54.3) YOU BELIEVE THERE WAS A JESUS?

Female Respondent: Could have been.

(0:45:57.7) AS A JEWISH WOMAN?

Female Respondent: No, as a Jewish guy.

(0:46:01.4) AS A JEWISH PERSON YOU BELIEVE THERE WAS A JESUS?

Female Respondent: Yes, and he was built up to be a messiah and he wasn't.

(0:46:07.8) STORYTELLING?

Female Respondent: Yes. He wasn't the messiah. He didn't fit the criteria. It was just this insane story of how they forced Jesus to be the messiah when he didn't even fit any of the criteria and then they wrapped the stories around him. *(One respondent agreed.)*

(0:46:29.1) WHAT DID YOU START TO SAY?

Cassandra: How do you know? It's a church. They needed someone for their people to believe in. You don't know if he's real or not.

Female Respondent: Because he fits the job.

Cassandra: I could develop a religion tomorrow and have a worm as my God and people would believe it was actually real and it could be completely made up. It's a business. They need someone for people to rally around or something for people to believe in. The Bible was written by people who can write whatever they want. *(One respondent agreed.)*

(0:47:05.3) HOW DID YOU GET TO THAT POINT?

Cassandra: Spiritualness, the fact that I believe in being a good person. How did I get to the fact that I think that?

(0:47:23.5) JESUS WASN'T?

Cassandra: I don't know if he was or wasn't. I don't think anybody can say for positive or sure because nobody was there alive *(laughs)* when supposedly he was alive. the Bible and all the different writings are written down by people who created a religion.

(0:47:39.2) WHEN DID YOU START QUESTIONING THIS?

Female Respondent: I think from the very beginning. And then I have a family member that was in a cult, and to me religious cults, same thing. They also have their core beliefs and they're all so adamant about them. One says Christians are right or Catholics say, "No, we're right." *(One respondent agreed.)* But they all believe in Jesus, so it's confused. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I remember as a little kid asking my parents, "I don't understand how the dinosaurs fit in with Jesus and Mary and Joseph." I was so confused. They didn't have a good answer for me, so I felt like from day one I was like, "Okay, this is b*****t." *(Laughs.)*

Female Respondent: If you read the Bible, it's like reading a fiction story. I read it, and I'm like, "Are you kidding me? People believe? Come on." *(Laughs.)* To me, I don't want to be judgmental, but to me it's just some of things in there I'm like wow. People believe a lot of it actually happened and that's fine. If

that's what they want to believe, I respect that, but to me, my personal belief is all this is crazy to me. *(Laughs.)* I can't personally believe in that because it doesn't make sense to me.

Female Respondent: You asked the question how I come to that and it goes back to the word Christian for me. It happened all with wanting things to make sense and conversations I had with Christians and people walking away from the conversation feeling they nailed that answer. I was like, "You didn't make any sense whatsoever." *(One respondent agreed.)* "You just did not help. In fact, you made it worse." It was, I'd say, late teens, early twenties. It teaches in the Bible, you get taught to believe constantly that man is fallible. Man is fallible. Then man wrote the New Testament. But it was God inspired, so it's right. Wait, are people fallible or is it right?

Female Respondent: That was me *(0:49:49.4 unclear/crosstalk)*. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Nobody has a real answer, and it's conversations with Christians that have made me go, "Y'all don't know what you're talking about." *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: The most interesting thing, I studied evolution. I had evolution and a Bible-beating Christian come in and have a debate. It was the most fascinating thing I've ever heard because we're a bunch of scientists. We believe what you can physically hold in your hand and physically see. This guy was just . . . We're saying, "The dinosaur fossils were found here. Man is found up here, and the levels, how he did it." God is just testing your faith. *(One respondent agreed.)* It was just so perplexing and then there's a place in Texas, Glen Rose or somewhere. That's apparently what all Christians say, God is testing your faith. There they have a dinosaur footprint and human footprint on the same level. They say, "Well, see, look. They're on the same level here so that means that they're at the same time," but then also saying, "But you just said that because they're on different levels it doesn't . . ." It was all just so backwards and so fascinating with the way this guy could just talk in circles and circles. Thankfully, that evolutionist was a great debater and was listening to the things he would say and then write it down and come back. Wait a minute, and the guy would get so frazzled. As a scientist I feel like I know things can be different from what they seem, but if you can physically hold something in your hand and someone else is like, "You have to believe them. Just believe what they say," that for me is *(0:51:27.8 unclear/crosstalk)*.

(0:51:28.2) THAT'S JUST TOO DIFFERENT FOR YOU?

Female Respondent: Yes. Honestly, until I got into college and studied that Christianity, I never went to church. I never knew anything about it. I actually felt a little uncomfortable that I didn't know anything about it. Then in college I learned all about it and learned about Buddhism, Wiccanism, Satanism, all that stuff, but Christianity was the most fascinating for me. I don't want to say backward, kind of backwards, though. They were trying to defend fiction with fact.

Female Respondent: Fables.

Female Respondent: Maybe because there's so much here that it was batted into you when you're a Christian. I saw the transformation happen with my mother. We were more passive Catholics and then

just intense fear about going to hell (*one respondent agreed*) or you were constantly being watched. My mother thought that my salvation was her responsibility and so she would like flip sh** because she just couldn't handle it. That's one thing in the Bible. You're not supposed to question anything. This is what it is. If you're questioning it, you're not being a good Christian. You don't believe in God. It's like, "What?" I think when Christians counteract with someone who is able to think outside the box and even exploring other possibilities, it makes them physically uncomfortable because they aren't allowed to do that. They have somehow oppressed or repressed that part of their mind so much, and when you say something that even makes sense or contradicts what they're thinking, their whole world is being questioned and their whole world is just too uncomfortable. It's unstable. They're not allowed to talk about it anymore.

Female Respondent: I think another thing with that, too, is it's true. They get really uncomfortable, but also at the end of the day when it's all over with, they're relieved. There is a scripture within the New Testament that talks about how the world will look after all of the foolishness. (*One respondent agreed.*) They take comfort in that.

Female Respondent: That would make sense. That's part of it. (*One respondent agreed.*) (*Laughter.*)

Female Respondent: I never noticed that, but it does make it weird.

Female Respondent: It seems like Christianity just takes anything (*laughter*) and just makes it. . . They hijack a lot and they change a story just to make it fit. (*One respondent agreed.*)

Female Respondent: That's because they're trying to gather more people, right?

Female Respondent: Yes. Both Easter and Christmas were pagan holidays that they hijacked.

Female Respondent: They won't, they won't admit it either. (*Laughter.*)

Female Respondent: I've had that similarity where they go in circles. It's like, "What?"

Female Respondent: Also, one of the greatest parts about this evolutionist was he was debating a guy with passages in the Bible, so he was saying, "Okay, well you're saying everything in the Bible is correct? Here is this passage saying that what you're saying is wrong."

(0:54:40.2) CAN BE CHALLENGED?

Female Respondent: Contradicting word for word what you are saying, but you can literally find two different passages that will . . . it's mind-boggling.

(0:54:51.4) HOW DID YOU COME TO BELIEVE WHAT YOU DO ABOUT JESUS?

Female Respondent: Something in my experience, the reason I came to believe in what I believe now, not only about Jesus but I guess Christianity in general, was mostly just studying it. Christianity talks a lot about being they are the absolute truth. They are the one way to get to heaven or whatever. I was like if that's the one way, then it must be provable.

Female Respondent: I'm coming to hell. *(Laughter.) (One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I guess for me I wanted to make sure. I've got to make sure this is real. If it's the one way, then it must stand on its feet. It must be provable unless it's, I don't know. It must be true or whatever. I studied it out and it ended up not working out. Within those studies it took a long time to figure the study out but within the studies there were a couple of things that I started to believe about Jesus and a lot of it was pagan things that are mixed with the Jesus story. That was awkward to believe in because, like I said, it was something that was close to my heart and then I was like this is just a bunch of pagan crap. Great. Anyways, beliefs about Jesus right now would be mostly like it's a lot of story. Like you said, it's a story that has gone through thousands of years and here it is now in modern-day time and who really knows what happened.

(0:56:53.7) YOU BELIEVE THAT HE EXISTED BUT HE DIDN'T DO ANY OF THE OTHER STUFF?

Female Respondent: I believe that he presumably didn't do any of the other. The miracles? I don't really know. I don't personally know what exactly happened, but I guess what I think is that a lot of myth got mixed in there. It's quite possible that a lot of the miracles and the virgin birth and all of that is simply myth, and a story that got embedded into this church thought.

(0:57:30.1) ANY OTHER THOUGHTS ON SOME OF THOSE STATEMENTS AND BELIEFS THAT WE HEAR OUT THERE ABOUT JESUS?

Female Respondent: There's parts of it, like immaculate conception. I have a hard time believing that and such. Again, it goes back with how I feel about the Bible and stuff. Or even how a lot of people believe that Catholicism takes on a lot of pagan stuff or particularly in the Bible. It's how you relate to people. That's how you communicate. If people were pagans or practicing, that's how you would identify with them, pulling in their experiences, what they believed to draw them into the faith. I believe that the idea of Jesus, or him as a person, may have existed as far as Jesus as an individual.

Female Respondent: I think I don't really believe Jesus existed. I think I heard or read that at least 5 percent of what he said is actually in the Bible. I think I practice more Buddhism now and I think that Buddhism is very similar to what Jesus taught. I tell my mom, because I love Jesus. I'm a big fan, not necessarily the Christian-go-to-heaven in his name, but I think that he was definitely a lightworker. I think that he was a positive, loving person, and there's so much about Jesus' life that isn't in the Bible, just years of his adult life. There's theories that he went to work in Asia and studied Buddhism and started doing these really incredible spiritual things and then brought them back and taught people how to manifest stuff and how to connect with the spirit. I believe that maybe that was even why he was killed. He wasn't killed, and it wasn't said that he died for your sins until the Protestant Reformation years after to help popularize Christianity and Catholicism to bring more people in—having that whole relationship that God is your friend, because people were so turned off by Christianity at that point. I think that's where he was whored out by the church. I think that he was alive. I definitely think he existed. I think that he's a spiritual leader, but more spiritual within yourself and then came back and

was treated that way. In the Bible there's twenty-six original gospels. Only four of them got put in the Bible. I think that maybe there's more to that. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: I know. That's a quite big disparity.

Female Respondent: Yes, because they handpicked and selected them to go with a certain creed that they were trying to work for. They were trying to build this brand. *(One respondent agreed.)* That's something that personally almost hurts my feelings because so many people are missing out on the lessons of purpose, of life, of what Jesus was supposed to do, immaculate conception. That all is stolen from all different religions. I think there's many different religions that have virgin births. There are so many different religions where the son of God died for your sins. It's just this one became the main one and so that's the only thing that we can think of, hear it, see it, but it's the pattern that's been going on.

(1:01:10.0) TALK ABOUT THE ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY THAT YOU FIND LESS THAN ACCEPTABLE.

Female Respondent: It's awful. *(One respondent agreed.) (Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Exactly as we say, you're going to hell. Because you say Christianity in general, my sister thinks Catholics are going to hell. That's crazy to me. *(Laughter.)* Believe or hell—exactly.

(1:01:54.2) SOMEBODY ELSE?

Female Respondent: I think the idea that you can just ask for forgiveness and you can pretty much do whatever you want. *(Laughter.)*

(1:02:04.2) SOMEBODY ELSE?

Female Respondent: One thing that I don't like is the idea that Christian groups think that they are basically the most blessed, the best, and that everyone else is broken. Everyone else needs to be fixed. Everyone else is outside of their circle, so noninclusive, like she said.

Female Respondent: The idea of evangelism. *(One respondent agreed.)*

(1:02:34.4) HOW DO YOU MEAN?

Female Respondent: When they come up to you and say, "Hey, have you met my friend named Jesus? Let me tell you. He died for you." *(Laughter.)* No.

Female Respondent: There's different sects of religion, of Christianity, I can't remember which one, but they believe that they cannot go to heaven unless they are passing their word onto other people.

(1:03:07.9) YES, I'M JUST PLAYING DEVIL'S ADVOCATE.

Female Respondent: Yes, essentially forcing. We had people in our school quad, if they saw two men walking or two women walking together, they would pull you out and they would try to humiliate you

until someone else would, or they stand up for themselves. It was horrible. Texas State eventually got the best of that. Those things wouldn't happen for very long, but that just, pushing their beliefs.

(1:03:36.4) HYPOCRISY?

Female Respondent: Yes. The hypocrisy of all of it and the pretentiousness. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: You're supposed to love everyone except for the gays and the *(1:03:45.1 unclear) (Laughter.)* Whatever.

(1:03:49.3) WHO ELSE DON'T YOU LOVE BESIDES THE GAYS?

Female Respondent: Not me, but the religious. *(Laughter.)* I love everybody.

(1:03:56.6) WHO ELSE?

Female Respondent: *(1:04:00.5 unclear/crosstalk).* Nonbelievers. *(1:04:02.1 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: Any other religion.

(1:04:03.8) I HEARD GAYS AND I HEARD?

Female Respondent: Nonbelievers.

(1:04:07.6) NONBELIEVERS?

Female Respondent: Sorry. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: People of other religions. *(Several respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: Anyone who doesn't believe what they believe.

(1:04:14.3) WHAT ELSE?

Female Respondent: People who have premarital sex. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: They don't have it themselves.

Female Respondent: Yes, yes. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Or divorces that break the bonds of the church, or whatever the hell crap it is.

Female Respondent: Annulments.

Female Respondent: Divorcing and taking the vows of the church.

Female Respondent: I heard it in a *(1:04:37.8 unclear/crosstalk).*

(1:04:37.0) WHAT OTHER ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY DO YOU DISLIKE?

Female Respondent: I have something. Something that I find less than acceptable is the idea that in Christianity you're essentially closing off your common sense and closing off your body's ability to think and you're worshipping an idea or a book or a thought. Christianity itself is based on the idea that you can't trust yourself because you're innately bad. Common sense, your primal feelings, your primal actions, your primal desires (1:05:12.7 unclear/crosstalk). (Several respondents agreed.)

(1:05:14.2) THE EASY WAY OUT?

Female Respondent: If you don't support the church, then . . .

Female Respondent: To me the whole idea of a God that requires worship is just not really (one respondent agreed) something I can't get behind.

Female Respondent: I think tradition, too. I think that's what draws a lot of people to church is their nostalgia, but also I feel like it restricts you or even restricts the church community.

(1:05:38.4) THE NOSTALGIA DOES?

Female Respondent: The tradition of it.

Female Respondent: You have to practice or (1:05:43.9 unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: The treatment towards women and the church and the inequality. Men are always supposed to be above women. Women can't be above a man. I remember my mother when we would go to church because there was women that read the Torah.

(1:05:59.9) IS THAT PART OF THE HYPOCRISY?

Female Respondent: Yes.

(1:06:02.1) OR IS IT DIFFERENT?

Female Respondent: No. I don't think so. I think that's the patriarchy of it, it's basically almost this thing that worships men and that almost makes sense with the pedophilia in a way because only men are of worth and they see you like . . . that celibacy of . . .

Female Respondent: What about pedophilia? (Several respondents agreed.)

Female Respondent: No, that's not.

Female Respondent: That's not in the traditions of Christianity. (One respondent agreed.) (1:06:29.9 unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: They sure do cover it up enough, though. (One respondent agreed.)

Female Respondent: They sure do practice. (Laughter.)

Female Respondent: Hypocrisy (1:06:34.4 unclear/crosstalk). (Laughter.)

Female Respondent: Sorry. (Laughter.)

Female Respondent: What about war and murder?

Female Respondent: Yes, what about that?

Female Respondent: What about (1:06:46.4 unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: What about abortions?

Female Respondent: They hate them. (Several respondents agreed.)

Female Respondent: The Christians will stand outside my doctor's office and yell at me even though I'm going for my womanly exam. (Laughter.)

(1:06:58.1) TELL ME ABOUT WAR.

Female Respondent: It's littered throughout Christianity. There's always been war.

(1:07:10.0) IS IT WAR OVER THE BELIEFS, OR THAT CHRISTIANS SAY THEY'RE GOING TO HAVE A WAR?

Female Respondent: I think it's all of the above. All of the above.

Female Respondent: Murdering (1:07:19.7 unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: Yes, killing in the name of God.

Female Respondent: (1:07:21.6 unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: Who is it that the . . . Spanish Inquisition?

Female Respondent: Yes. (One respondent agreed.)

Female Respondent: The Crusades?

Female Respondent: The tendency to make things conform to what they want, what they're trying to push, if you will.

Female Respondent: Preaching.

Female Respondent: Yes. For instance, the western Jesus is a white man, but in the Bible he had dark, coarse hair and was olive skinned. That wouldn't fit the Western, so they're like, "Oh, wait. Forget about that. He was actually a white man."

Female Respondent: Just things like that.

(1:08:09.3) WHAT ELSE?

Female Respondent: I think the idea that Christianity, the intolerance of it, has led to just a lot of destruction of culture and evil groups, and to me they are still two and the same.

Female Respondent: It can be self-serving. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I think baptism is a weird concept. *(1:08:37.7 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: Yes, baptism.

(1:08:40.9) BAPTISM IS SHOWING AS OPPOSED TO INTERNAL TO YOU?

Female Respondent: I feel like most Christians, Christianity maybe sometimes *(1:08:56.6 unclear)*. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: They're making my thirty-year-old brother get baptized to get married in his fiancé's church. *(One respondent agreed.)* He's doing it for her, because he feels bad, but he's an atheist, so that will be fun. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: The push for marriage. I don't know why they have to project marriage as a *(one respondent agreed)* male-female thing. They don't even need their *(1:09:19.9 unclear/crosstalk)*. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: And taxes and *(1:09:23.4 unclear/crosstalk)*.

Female Respondent: I don't like when they indoctrinate the kids. *(One respondent agreed.)* They're so little. They don't even give them a chance to have their own feeling about their belief or their sense of self. *(One respondent agreed.) (1:09:33.3 unclear/crosstalk)*.

Female Respondent: That's like original sin. That's, like, so big.

Female Respondent: You're born a sinner. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I hate that concept that we're all a sinner and there's nothing we can do about it.

Female Respondent: You can ask for forgiveness.

(1:09:47.5) IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A LOT WRAPPED AROUND INTOLERANCE?

Female Respondent: Yes.

(1:09:59.1-1:10:14.7 MODERATOR RECAPS CONCEPTS ON BOARD.)

Female Respondent: End the recruiting. Let people come to you. You don't need to recruit.

Female Respondent: Aggressively recruiting. *(Several respondents agreed.) (1:10:20.3 unclear/crosstalk).* They advertise on commercials now. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Billboards.

(1:10:25.6) IS THAT A CHRISTIANITY THING?

Female Respondent: I think, but I lump them all together. I don't know.

Female Respondent: Yes. I have seen that.

Female Respondent: *(1:10:32.9 Unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: I don't think I've ever seen another religion pushing themselves, at least on television or social media.

Female Respondent: I see Christianity a lot.

Female Respondent: *(1:10:41.0 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: That's another thing I really don't care for is you can't even have a conversation hardly with a religious person. They automatically take you as being combative even though you might be honestly asking a question. Honestly, why do you believe that? Already there, you can see their blood pressure going through the roof and then they're upset. Then they start, I feel, becoming insulting or criticizing your character for the fact that you don't just believe or that you're asking questions. I don't know. That's the experience I've had, which is nuts. They want to recruit, and the fact that you don't want to come with to this team.

Female Respondent: About the commercials and stuff?

Female Respondent: Yes, because I've never had any other religion come to my door, and I've had four Christians come to my door giving me flyers and stuff. I feel like a marketing victim. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: I think they really know it's stupid and that they *(laughter)* shouldn't believe it, but they're so scared to not believe it. All of that is just insecurity to me about their own religion. They doubt it. They don't want to admit that they doubt it.

Female Respondent: But they don't see how disrespectful that is. I'm agnostic. I don't even care one way. I honestly do not care. When you're asking how you feel about raising and the immaculate, I don't care. I'd rather focus on feeding the hundreds of hungry kids that come through my door every day, than trying to figure out something that happened however long ago. I guess it is the fear, but just to me, and I think they get so caught up in these petty, tiny little things. Why don't we worry about real problems like world hunger and the fact that we're not going to have any water in fifty years? We might destroy ourselves and the earth. Why don't we talk about that?

Female Respondent: But Jesus (1:12:22.8 unclear/crosstalk) if you had any faith in him. (One respondent agreed.) (Laughter.)

Female Respondent: There are numerous politicians on record that have said, when asked about environmental issues, they say, “It’s kind of a problem, but Jesus is coming before the end of my lifetime so I don’t really care.” It’s terrifying that there are people in charge of our country that actually do think that way and believe that (1:12:49.8 unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: They’re supposed to destroy the earth because that’s what we’re supposed to do because we like Jesus (two respondents agreed) so it’s, “Here, just use everything, and when you’re done I’ll be here.” They think it’s their divine right as human beings to completely plow through the earth.

Female Respondent: Wow.

(1:13:12.3) AS WE LOOK AT THE BIG-PICTURE OBJECTIONS, HOW DOES THIS CREATE THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS? IT’S NEGATIVE?

Female Respondent: It gets involved with politics. You see it all the time, something like that.

(1:14:38.4) GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF POLITICS.

Female Respondent: Pro-choice/pro-life, that whole debate.

(1:14:44.2) TELL ME ABOUT HOW THAT’S POLITICAL.

Female Respondent: Because our politicians decided that, to take it to the house and the vote on it.

(1:14:53.9) BECAUSE THEY HEARD A CHRISTIAN TALK OR WHAT?

Female Respondent: I think it’s something the whole idea of it got framed to pick up party members. We want this group of people in our party, so we’re going to take this position on it. Then people will hear what their church believes. My grandparents still, they write down whatever the priest says, and they go for it. It’s scary that you’re going to let concepts from thousands of years ago, I don’t know. All of this is the gathering of so much things and just follow blindly, and that’s so intertwined with our politics and things.

(1:15:44.8) THEY TAKE A POSITION ON ABORTION TO ATTRACT CHRISTIANS TO BE THEIR VOTERS?

Female Respondent: Yes. (Several respondents agreed.)

Female Respondent: I think that the framework’s there.

Female Respondent: Not only that, politicians and everybody use all of that as a justification to make it okay for one person or one group to mistreat and/or control another. (Several respondents agreed.) Because of all of this, it’s okay to make abortion illegal. Because of all of this, gay people can’t get

married. Because of all of this whatever. Back in the day, men could beat their women (*one respondent agreed*) because in the Bible it says the man is the head of the house or whatever. All throughout history it's been a different thing.

Female Respondent: Even now, women can get raped and they get cast out because they were raped (*one respondent agreed*), which is not their fault.

(1:16:26.7) IS THAT CHRISTIANS?

Female Respondent: I think there are some Christians, yes. I think all of the above.

Female Respondent: Or it's still looked at as the woman's fault (*one respondent agreed*) because sexuality in the Bible, it's just all put on women. Even if you got raped, or if you were treated inappropriately because your body somehow elicits a response from some man that's not any of your fault or any of your responsibility, it's still put on you. To be a whore in Christianity is just, like, so horrible.

(1:17:04.7) ARE YOU SAYING WOMEN WHO ARE ASSAULTED OR TREATED INAPPROPRIATELY . . . ?

Female Respondent: Are, at the very least, frowned upon.

(1:17:22.5) CHRISTIANS FROWN UPON HER MORE THAN OTHERS?

Female Respondent: I think that the overbearing patriarchy of the Bible has inadvertently, or advertently, put women in the position that they're not respected as much. They don't have as much equality and that expressing themselves with sexuality. If a woman's doing something, sometimes you're running your mouth. Even if you got hit or something, "Well, what did you do to piss them off?"

(1:17:57.9) HOW ARE CHRISTIANS BEHIND THAT?

Female Respondent: The church reinforces that. (*One respondent agreed.*)

Female Respondent: Yes, reinforces that culture.

Female Respondent: When I was growing up, if there was an issue of domestic violence or even abuse of children or even sexual abuse or whatever, it was something that we deal with within the church. Don't even go to the authorities. First come here and let's try to counsel. It's like, "No! Pack your kid up and pack your bag and get the heck out of there." I don't know.

Female Respondent: The fact that the church seems to, and I don't know exactly what other laws they have, but they seem to have different rules than the rest of society, and get treated differently. Like this whole health care thing. It's like we're going to say religious organizations, I can't remember, can't pay for anything to do with . . .

Female Respondent: Birth control.

Female Respondent: It's the birth control.

Female Respondent: Birth control and everybody can't have birth control.

Female Respondent: They shouldn't even be involved. There's one rule for everybody.

(1:19:12.6) THEY'RE ASKING FOR SPECIAL PERMISSION?

Female Respondent: Yes, yes, yes, totally. Or we're not going to hire this woman because I don't want to provide her birth control. If you're not Christian, then we're not going to hire you because only Christians are going to have all the babies in the world.

(1:19:29.9) TELL ME ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION HAVING A DIFFERENT VIEW THAN YOU MIGHT HAVE REGARDING GAY MARRIAGE.

Female Respondent: They keep bringing it up. It's, like, that's not our biggest problem, people.

Female Respondent: At all. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: *(1:19:48.0 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: Who cares?

Female Respondent: Gays should suffer marriage like the rest of us, basically, is my view. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: There's also what our country was founded on was the separation of church and state. *(Several respondents agreed.)* We're running away from this persecution of essentially the church and Christianity. We come here and now we were doing well and then all of a sudden it is just getting flipped back. It's no one's business. If you want to believe it, believe it, but you don't have any say. It doesn't affect you in any way. If you think a gay person is going to go to hell, let them go to hell if they need to. But it has nothing to do with you and it's completely just tearing our country and our society apart that Christianity thinks that it is such a huge part of our country. I hear people say on a regular basis, our country is founded on Christianity.

Female Respondent: No, it wasn't.

Female Respondent: It wasn't, no. It was founded on the fact of separation of church and state. I'm sure our founding fathers probably were Christians, but they purposely *(laughs)* did not want *(1:20:53.8 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: I think no separation of church and state was to keep the government out of the church rather than the church out of the government, originally. Which doesn't really do well *(one respondent agreed)* for our argument. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: I think Christians, they're two separate entities. They need to be.

Female Respondent: They should be. They have the money.

Female Respondent: They need to be treated as such. Now there's the whole thing in Texas about creationism in the science books, which just breaks my heart because dinosaur class was my favorite and *(laughter)* now the kids don't even get to learn about that anymore. There's a place to learn about Christianity. Absolutely. I think it's an important thing to learn just so you know what's going on. If someone's going to yell at you on the street or kill in the name of God, kill you in the name of God, you should know why you're being killed. *(Laughter.)* But it has its place.

Female Respondent: The anti-gay marriage in general thing, it really seems to be more of an American Christianity thing. *(Several respondents agreed.)* Not a worldwide Christianity. Now we're getting to are American Christians dumber than the rest of the world? *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: It's probably because we have these whackos who want to bring it to the forefront instead of wasting our time on things like the economy or environmental issues or trying to get mental health services, we want to waste our time talking about something that really doesn't affect you. It's just stupid, and they're bringing it to the forefront and it doesn't even belong there. They keep pushing it. There are better things to talk about.

Female Respondent: It's a waste of time.

Female Respondent: That's not being taught about being respectful. Yes, you're right. My stepmom and dad are Christian. I'm sure they're against gay marriage and all that, but it doesn't affect them in any way, shape, or form. *(Laughter.)* If you love someone, you love someone. It's not hurting their religion if a gay couple gets married in any way. It's just their view, and they're wanting to push it on and think that everybody needs to think the way they think.

Female Respondent: It's just frustrating because what they're arguing for is just the same thing that they're arguing against. *(One respondent agreed.)* They don't want the government to tell them what to do in their church, but yet they're going to tell the government what they can do *(one respondent agreed)* outside of their church. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: Then people keep on bringing up the sanctity of marriage, but then you have all these religious and political leaders who are adulterers or they beat their wives. *(1:23:29.6 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: When it's all said, it's the Christian community, because they're so large, that they're not going to have supporters and not be elected *(one respondent agreed)* that the Christianity beliefs are affecting the whole . . .

Female Respondent: Yes, and it goes back to the picking and choosing of the one little thing that they want to choose to believe. It's like the gay people are going to destroy my view of the sanctity of marriage, but even the sanctity of marriage does include loving your spouse and treating them well and

not straying and all those things. They're just taking that one little thing that they think is right, which is entirely made up.

Female Respondent: It served as a distraction. I think a lot of stuff in Christianity, since it's creation, I think that a lot of things are created to have control and a distraction. I think that's always been for a very, very, very long time. I think that's the whole thing, like love your neighbors but go to war with your neighbors type thing. That's very confusing. If you can get people who are completely distracted by this very intense idealism and try to get them to fight amongst each other over these very stupid simple things, then they can control us. They've been doing that to us, not just the church, but government too for a really long time so that we just can do whatever they're doing.

Female Respondent: Behind the scenes (*one respondent agreed*). That means they're really getting other stuff done while we're discussing these useless topics. (*One respondent agreed.*)

Female Respondent: Like with the gay rights thing, (*laughter*) with gay marriage where there was something else. There was certain bills that were passed (*1:25:17.4 unclear/crosstalk*). (*Two respondents agreed.*) While we were all arguing about something that does elicit an emotional response, so it's very easy to do.

(1:25:30.2) DO THE POLITICIANS OR CHRISTIANS DO THAT?

Female Respondent: Christianity is.

Female Respondent: The politicians.

Female Respondent: It's part of the same thing (*1:25:34.8 unclear/crosstalk*). (*Several respondents agreed.*)

Female Respondent: Powerful and the rich, I think the 1 percent, is probably and I don't know the stats, but more than likely they're all Christians. (*One respondent agreed.*)

(1:25:46.4) IS THE JUDGED BEING JUDGED?

Female Respondent: I absolutely do see that point, but one of the differences for our group is that we can see the negative. We've all said, "But I know good." Most of them, not all of them, are saying, "Nope, it's only this way. Everyone who is a nonbeliever is a nonbeliever. There's no good nonbelievers." I think that usually nonbelievers are a little bit more open-minded, accepting of all religions and accepting of everything. (*One respondent agreed.*) It's being judgmental against the ones that are being judgmental against us, I guess. (*Two respondents agreed.*) I know that doesn't sound justified. If a Christian person came up and talked, I'm not going to not talk to a Christian person.

Female Respondent: Scream and run off?

Female Respondent: Yes, but I've had many actual experiences where people have asked me where I go to church. I say, "I don't go to church," and then they won't talk to me anymore. I worked in Wisconsin,

and I had some of the older customers would not talk to me anymore. They would not deal with me. They would not have me serve them anymore. I think that's the difference.

Female Respondent: I don't think that's a valid argument at all. I think we're just totally justified in (1:27:50.3 *unclear*) (*laughter*). We're saying this to each other here. We're not going out there and going up to a Christian and saying, "You are such a bad person because you are a Christian." This is a conversation. (One respondent agreed.) It's not like tomorrow I'm going to go tell one of my best friends that she's this evil person and not be her friend anymore and go sit on the opposite side of the lunchroom. (1:28:14.3 *unclear/crosstalk*).

Female Respondent: Are open-minded people better than closed-minded people? Yes, it's obvious. (*Laughter.*)

Female Respondent: We're not evangelizing our beliefs. (One respondent agreed.) We're not sitting there telling you, "You have to do it like this." Certainly I can judge you, but I'm not going to tell you if you don't agree with me you're going to hell. That's rough.

Female Respondent: It's the consequences they give that really bothers us. (One respondent agreed.)

Female Respondent: This is the other thing. I feel like not all, but most of the things on that list a Christian would agree with. They would say, "Yes, if you don't believe you're going to hell. Yes, we do not support abortionists or divorcees or premarital sex or nonbelievers or the gays." I think maybe not all like the pedophilia. Maybe they would think, some, that's a little extreme.

Female Respondent: That's a criminal thing, yes.

Female Respondent: But a lot of them say, "Yes, Eve was made from the rib of Adam or whatever and that's why she has been to whatever." Not all, but I think a lot of that . . . This is what we've learned from them. (One respondent agreed.) They have taught us this about them. We might not be regurgitating it correctly, but we generalized from what they have said. I think most of us, if they wanted to say something different we would be open to hearing it. But this is what we've been taught.

(1:29:27.7) THIS IS YOUR TAKEAWAY?

Female Respondent: Yes. (Several respondents agreed.) (*Laughter.*)

Female Respondent: It seems like a lot of us have negative experiences or (*coughing*) run-ins with Christians. I can 100 percent say that I have never gone and yelled at someone because they don't believe what I believe, or said I'm not going to be your friend because you're a Christian. I haven't gone out personally. Most Christians that I do know haven't either. That's great.

Female Respondent: Something interesting in terms of judging is . . . How do I want to word this? When I first got out of the church I, I sprung to the front of the spectrum, and was very, very judgmental towards religious people and Christians because I saw it as a dangerous thing. I'm a little more moderate now, but at the time . . . There's a lot of people that think this way, and there are a lot of people that

think that Christianity is responsible for a lot of war, or a lot of bad things that have happened in our history. Christianity is continuing to basically destroy our world and our culture. There's a lot of people that do think that way, and because of that they attack Christianity and they want it to change. They want it to be destroyed, and so there is definitely that stream of thought.

Female Respondent: I think that also what we're doing is a critique or a generalization of religious institutions. I don't have any problem with Christians generally speaking as individuals. I definitely understand how the community, the church, and stuff. We were talking about how do you feel about church. I still find myself going to mass or before mass as my little Zen moment, and my time to just be alone. It's also nostalgic. I'm away from my family and I grew up in a Catholic family, so even when it comes to smells or whatever, it's very strong for me. I think we were pretty pragmatic, logical in our critique. I don't think it's an angry angst, at least from my (1:31:48.7 *unclear/crosstalk*).

(1:31:50.9-1:32:29.7 MODERATOR CLARIFIES JUDGING THE JUDGERS.)

Female Respondent: It's not because they're antiabortion that I judge. If you're antiabortion, we might have a difference of opinion, so be it. But it's the fact that you're going to take someone's life or throw something at them or yell at them. I'm against yelling at people generally for anything. (*Laughter.*) For buying Cheerios, or McDonalds, whatever. Don't yell at people. It's not nice. It's not so much that they believe these things, it's what they do with that belief and the actions they take with those beliefs.

Female Respondent: Also, I think one of the major issues that we think we haven't hit the hypocrisy behind it, and you're saying that they're stacking up—that's their own hypocrisies—and it's just reinforcing as many of them were saying that they're going to fight amongst themselves about the things that they're all supposed to say the same.

Female Respondent: I like your point because even my parents are, just in the past five or ten years or whatever, the vocal super right wing is making the rest of the Christians (*one respondent agreed*) who are not that way look really bad. They don't like the way that their Christianity is being portrayed. I think that even Christians are leaving Christianity because of this vocal crazy side. There's plenty of lovely people that just go to church and don't force anything on anyone.

Female Respondent: Yes, they have no sense, probably (1:33:53.6 *unclear/soft spoken*).

(1:33:57.5) ALL OF WHAT?

Female Respondent: Nice things. There are positive things also, so I think we're focusing on the negative stuff. Probably a lot of our experiences maybe.

(1:34:08.7-1:36:26.9 MODERATOR DISCUSSES EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS AND THEIR CORE BELIEFS.)

Female Respondent: Oh, my goodness.

Female Respondent: You're not going to try and convert us, are you?

Female Respondent: That doesn't make any sense.

(1:34:49.5) NO, WHAT I WANT TO UNDERSTAND IS YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT THEM.

(1:35:19.8-1:35: MODERATOR CONTINUES EXPLANATION.)

Female Respondent: That doesn't make any sense.

(1:36:28.6) WHAT PART OF IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE?

Female Respondent: Your development of your belief is a lifelong thing, and it doesn't happen like that. You have to struggle with those things. I don't know. It just seems weird. We all grew up. We all came to realize things. We've all grown. I just don't see how that happens overnight.

Female Respondent: The action of accepting, how I was taught, even getting to that point where you're accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior is already considered to maybe be a struggle. Then what you're doing is you're accepting him into your heart and into your life and then you start your path of following. It's very, it's seems a lot more.

Female Respondent: Psychological too, like renewal and stuff like that. It's an experience.

Female Respondent: I accidentally went to a church camp when I was younger. *(Laughter.)* I legitimately had no idea. It sounded like a really fun camp and then on the packing list it said to bring your Bible. Me and my mom freaked out because we had to go buy one. It was a fun camp beyond this thing. it was minimal except for we would have the fun sing-along at night and then they would tell you you have to ask Jesus into your heart, and if you don't have him in your heart, then all that kind of stuff. They said it's going to happen this week. It's going to happen while you're here at camp. I, as someone who'd never even opened a Bible *(laughter)* was like, I'm an eleven-year-old kid. I'm like, oh s***. He has to come and do what? *(Laughter.)* I don't think that any of that ever happened to me, I think that's what started my interest in it. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: *(1:38:49.7 unclear) (coughing)* fit in the freezer? *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: It was *(1:38:54.0 unclear/crosstalk) (laughter)*. Even at eleven, I can remember thinking, "Wow, this is intense, and this is supposed to happen right now." That was the first time you're at a sleepaway camp with guys, and I was like, "All the guys are doing it." I'd want to impress the boys.

(1:39:15.5) BORN AGAIN WAS FORCED?

Female Respondent: I am not.

(1:39:18.7) OR WHATEVER?

Female Respondent: They were. You were going to *(1:39:22.9 unclear/crosstalk)*. Jesus was going to be in the heart by the end of this week, or you got your money back, essentially. It was a very bizarre, but really fun, camp, though, beyond that thing. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Something else, an opinion I have on Evangelicalism in general is the idea it puts so much emphasis on a simple thought. I believe that Jesus is my savior. Cool. Let them. Good to go. I think that's very dangerous because a lot of Christians stress out about, if I believe this I'm good, but then after that there's not a lot of action that will follow after that.

(1:40:07.2) IT SOUNDS EASY?

Female Respondent: Yes. Cool. I have this thought and then I'm good to go.

(1:40:16.2) OTHER THOUGHTS ON CONVERSION?

Female Respondent: I think if it's a conscious choice of your own, then that's what you're choosing to believe, great. In my experience I was forced to go to church. That process for me was you have to do this or . . . or what? (*Laughter.*) I didn't know at the time. For me, I was, "No, that's ridiculous. I want to make up my own mind." I think if conversion is a conscious choice that you're making, and it's not something that's forced on you, then it could be a positive thing for you, but in my experience it was really negative because it was not a choice.

(1:41:09.2-1:41:21.6 MODERATOR EXPLAINS ACTION CONCEPT.)

(1:41:21.6) REACTIONS?

Female Respondent: The pushy thing.

(1:41:24.8) THE PUSHY THING?

Female Respondent: They're being pushy on other people. Having been raised a Christian, it's so strange to me that you're stopping me to tell me that I need to be born again when you don't even know me. Why are you talking at me like that? It's pushy. It's pushy. It's disrespectful.

Female Respondent: Working for social justice, it blows my mind, but in their view the book that they found is what social justice should be.

(1:41:57.3) THE BIBLE?

Female Respondent: Yes. I assume that's where they're getting their call to social justice. Different people, I guess (*1:42:06.5 unclear/crosstalk*).

Female Respondent: They think it's their social duty to spread the word? Is that what you mean by social justice?

Female Respondent: (*1:42:11.7 unclear/crosstalk*).

Female Respondent: Why can't the . . . And tell people who want to know? (*Laughter.*) (*Two respondents agreed.*) If you've already said you think I'm going to hell, I am good with it, walk away. I don't want to know. Once you've made your . . .

Female Respondent: It's supposed to be hard work. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: *(1:42:31.1 unclear/crosstalk).*

(1:42:32.9-1:42:42.0 MODERATOR FURTHER EXPLAINS CONCEPTS.)

Female Respondent: What is that?

Female Respondent: Does that mean . . .

Female Respondent: I assume that means make sure gays can't get married. *(One respondent agreed.) (Laughter.)* Make sure the abortionists can't do that.

(1:42:49.5) IS SOUNDS LIKE IT'S WORKING AGAINST SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Female Respondent: Right.

Female Respondent: It goes back to the hypocrisy.

Female Respondent: What their views. I think they might have skewed views or skewed from my point of view. They have their own views of what it is, and it's not necessarily the best thing for society. It's just what's best for them.

(1:43:08.1) THESE ARE NOT THE SOUP KITCHEN PEOPLE?

Female Respondent: Yes.

Female Respondent: I don't know.

Female Respondent: *(1:43:11.8 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: I'm not sure.

Female Respondent: It could be. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: *(1:43:15.2 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: How do they define social justice?

Female Respondent: It's beautiful when you serve soup to the homeless, but when you serve the soup and say, "Here, have your soup. By the way, do you know Jesus?" That's what's wrong to me *(two respondents agreed)* because yes, I think everybody should do communal. I think that is all of our responsibility to do that stuff, but when you tie your religion to it.

Female Respondent: You kind of don't like that. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: Yes, it becomes, you just pervert it and it's . . . no, you don't do that. You do it because it's another human, not because they're a Christian.

Female Respondent: They got the idea to do it because of Christianity. I think that sometimes it can be okay and if it's a very gentle thing. I've come across some really beautiful people in my life, strangers who have just helped me, and they're like, "No, I'm doing this because Jesus asked me to be kind to everyone." They left that conversation open. If I wanted to talk to them about Jesus that I could, but I didn't, and so they left me alone. They were just being kind. I think a lot of things like churches can do a lot of good things for people. I think if they were actually doing what Jesus wanted you to do, which is be kind and be giving and give of yourself, then I think that would be perfect. But what they're doing is they're trying to run a specific agenda that satisfies whatever specific interpretation about tolerance from the Bible that they're to get to. I think gentle reminders: it's okay to say I'm doing this because Jesus taught me. If you are trusted and being in a loving place and surrounded by loving people, and if you like what I'm doing and you want to be a part of this, then come join me on Sunday. There's a great group of people. But when you're yelling at them and saying . . . *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: One thing that I think the Bible, even though there's so many different interpretations and there's so many different things that the Bible says, it's all right according to religion because it's all in the Bible. *(Laughs.)* You could go any way you want.

Female Respondent: Your Bible doesn't frighten me.

Female Respondent: Then you're okay because you believe in the Bible and you're doing what's right in the Bible.

(1:45:31.5-1:45:48.1 MODERATOR EXPLAINS BIBLE CONCEPT.)

Female Respondent: You can interpret it and do really nice things, or you can interpret it and do really crappy things.

Female Respondent: That's the thing. If you're going to say that you're going to do everything by the Bible *(1:45:55.4 unclear/crosstalk)*. *(Laughter.)* If you're going to do everything by the book, then you need to do everything by the book. You can't just choose one little piece of it that you want to say. The Bible preaches pretty decent things like loving all, helping out your brother, but if you're not going to choose all . . . If you're going to say I follow it to the word and then not follow it to the word, that's, you're not . . .

(1:46:22.7) THAT'S HYPOCRISY?

Female Respondent: Yes. I think it's a nice idea to maybe say that we're going to do everything in the Bible, but if you're not going to do it, don't pretend that you do.

Female Respondent: That's one interesting thing about Christianity is that they put this book on a pedestal and yet they only pay attention to the last 1/10 of it. *(Laughter.)* They ignore the first 9/10 of it, which is a really big deal because there's a lot of other stuff going on that they completely ignore and they pick and choose. They dwell on the last couple of chapters.

Female Respondent: There's little things in there. You're supposed to sell your first daughter into slavery and men can't cut their hair on their temples. There's things like that that they just choose to ignore.

Female Respondent: It's two thousand years later. They followed it exactly . . .

Female Respondent: You couldn't. *(Laughter.)*

(1:47:20.3) WE WOULDN'T HAVE CARS?

Female Respondent: Yes. *(One respondent agreed.) (1:47:22.9 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: There's still a lot of applicable stuff. *(One respondent agreed.)*

(1:47:28.4-1:47:41.2 MODERATOR EXPLAINS CROSS CONCEPT.)

(1:47:41.2) WHAT DO YOU THINK WHEN YOU HEAR THAT?

Female Respondent: That's insane.

Female Respondent: Fear.

(1:47:44.9) FEAR? INSANE?

Female Respondent: I just never ever understood the whole, "He died on the cross for your sins" thing. *(One respondent agreed.)* I can't even grasp that concept. Why? I didn't sin, I wasn't even around. *(Laughter.)* Why am I paying for it? *(Laughter.)* I didn't ask you for that. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Are you also familiar with the theory that the cross was developed from the ancient Mayans and the omens because they had their signature, which is the center of their universe, and they would put a cross on their tree, their sacred tree. Then the Christians came over and developed that as their religious symbol. I personally have that view of that. It doesn't represent all that people claim it to.

Female Respondent: When I look at it, it makes me realize life and death, and just the fear aspect of it. *(Two respondents agreed.)* I think that it's always interesting because they say do good so that when you die you go to heaven, which is actually not a really good thing. You should be doing good just based on the merit of being a good person. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I think the resurrection, he's going to come back and save the good people. I'm a good person but I'm not Christian. Does that mean I'm going to get saved? Not that I think I'm going to get saved anyway because I don't believe in that, but I just think it's . . . Good people who aren't Christian or Evangelical Christians, they just go to hell? *(Laughter.)*

(1:49:23.3) IS THAT JUST EVANGELICALS OR A CHRISTIAN THING?

Female Respondent: No, I don't think it's a Christian necessarily thing. Because like I said, I have Christian friends who probably don't think I'm going to hell just because I'm not Christian, but maybe someone who is hardcore, that believes in the resurrection, yes. I don't know if that's Evangelical.

(1:49:42.8) IS RESURRECTION A HARDCORE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT?

Female Respondent: Yes. *(Several respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: It's one of the main things about Christianity in general is the resurrection. *(One respondent agreed.)*

(1:49:51.5) THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD?

Female Respondent: Yes. *(Several respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: That's also borrowed, I think, from paganism, too. *(One respondent agreed.)* A lot of other different religions.

Female Respondent: I have to say when I see people wearing their cross *(laughs)* it always go through my head, "I hope you're not a hypocrite." *(Laughter.)* It's so bad.

Female Respondent: It's your Southern Baptist upbringing. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: I'm always, like, why. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: I always imagine, I think this is bad, I think they have a lower . . . They're not as smart as me. I don't think their religion is. *(Laughter.)* That's bad, and I think a lot of it is just how they were raised and it is a cult thing. Some people are, every time I go by an accident I still do this because it's ingrained in me *(one respondent agreed)* to do that blessing. I don't necessarily believe it, but I also think that that's like I'm still sending positive energy out there. I think when people wear a cross sometimes they're hardcore *(1:50:47.8 unclear/crosstalk)*.

(1:50:48.5) OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS?

Female Respondent: Outside my door I have a mezuzah, which has a Hebrew letter on it. I have a mat that says Shalom y'all. *(Laughter.)* Obviously a Jewish person lives there. I'm always finding Christian material hanging right underneath the mezuzah. It's like, "Really? You didn't see the mat?" I've literally had people try to talk me . . . This one girl, she could not believe that I would not believe in Jesus. It was like she was going to talk me into it. Really? No.

(1:51:56.3) WAS SHE AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN?

Female Respondent: Yes. I don't care what you believe. Believe what you believe, but at least respect that I have my ways and I don't want your beliefs because I have my own. Thank you. It's just it's annoying and it's heartbreaking sometimes because it's like, "Really? You can't just be okay with the way I am?" I just want them to leave me alone. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: It seems like the Evangelical churches have way too much money to be honest.

(1:52:34.7) TELL ME ABOUT THAT.

Female Respondent: The Evangelical churches, I don't know what they're called, but the ones on TV with the big giant churches and all. *(Laughter.)*

(1:52:41.0) THE TV CHURCHES ARE EVANGELICAL?

Female Respondent: Yes. That's what I picture as an Evangelical church. It's not just the one. They seem to reach giant, giant audiences. It's too much. It should be a little bit more grassroots.

Female Respondent: It's the business I was talking about *(one respondent agreed)* as a business. When I was in junior high, I think I was in sixth grade, I went to a Billy Graham concert. *(Laughter.)* That Astrodome was packed, and there was Billy Graham. The thing wrapped up with making sure everybody gave 10 percent. It was all a business pitch. I was a little kid and I was stressing about how am I going to get this money to this guy. *(Laughter.)*

(1:53:22.7) IS THAT AN EVANGELICAL THING?

Female Respondent: Mm-hmm. *(Affirmative.)*

(1:53:24.3) OR A CHRISTIAN THING OR A CHURCH THING?

Female Respondent: Billy Graham, I believe, is rather Evangelical. *(1:53:29.1 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: Is that the one with Tammy Faye?

Female Respondent: Yes.

Female Respondent: No.

Female Respondent: No, no, no.

Female Respondent: Tammy Faye was with Jim Bakker.

Female Respondent: There you go. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I was just remembering, because we always had the Evangelicals outside in our quad in school and they were horrible, terrible people and would make people cry. It would always cause a riot and we had this horse that was the freedom of speech. It was essentially, like, so people could go have speeches and what have you, or if there was something the school was doing you could protest there. These Evangelicals would stand on that horse and just piss off the students and be just mean. Then I was just remembering how horrible it was and also entertaining to see the people who would stand up to them. But then there was also this little old man who would stand on the corner down the way. Everyone *(1:54:19.9 unclear/crosstalk).* What you would think was *(1:54:23.1*

unclear/crosstalk). There's an old man in the middle of all these college students, so they would take what he had. It was a little tiny Bible. He didn't say anything. He just gave it to you. That was a peaceful way of doing what he felt that he needed to do. It was obnoxious, and I was like, "That's a waste of paper," but we did have recycling bins for said flyers, so you could just throw it in there. But that was a really tolerant, nice way. I guess because maybe it's just an older generation of people there. Old people are usually kinder and not so radical. There was mean, horrible people doing all that they could.

(1:55:01.3) WERE THEY EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS?

Female Respondent: Yes. I was thinking more about it. Yes, they were. They had these signs of all the things that you were going to hell for, and there was always typos on it, and it was so great. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: There was always what?

Female Respondent: Typos. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: *(1:55:17.0 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: The "God hates fags" people in Boston. We made their signs with all this stuff. We made a sign that said "God loves spell-check."

(1:55:28.8) THOUGHTS ON EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS?

Female Respondent: They're very showy. They're definitely making a show, perhaps to get people who are more likely to believe in that kind of show, people who are looking for a miracle, who are looking for something to have faith in. They put on that show for them. I think that they do a good job collecting a lot of people's money who are looking for that miracle.

Female Respondent: Next door to our house growing up, there was this family. The father was a youth pastor and he was always encouraging us to go to youth group. We would, because there would be a trampoline or whatever thing outside.

Female Respondent: *(1:56:29.6 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: But he was always trying to get us to the service there. My family, I had a bunch of siblings, we'd all pile in the car and go to mass. Every now and then we would go because we were friends with his kids and such. He was just always really very outspoken about his beliefs and how his faith was amazing, do this, and this is what you need in your life. You'll be a better person. Then a couple of years later his wife was diagnosed with cancer and he had an affair. They kicked him out of the church. Because of his behavior, he really just set himself up for people to be like . . . You know what I mean? The fact that he was such a proponent of this church and then when that happened, they kicked him out.

(1:57:28.0) IT WAS WORKING UP UNTIL (1:57:29.8 UNCLEAR/CROSSTALK).

Female Respondent: You're human.

Female Respondent: People fail.

Female Respondent: People fail, but the thing is that he was just so in other people's faces about it. They were like, "Serves you right. Look who doesn't want to associate with you now." I don't know.

Female Respondent: It's bad when they do that. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I also see evangelists as somewhat oppressive, because I actually found Jesus material on my desk at work, which was highly inappropriate. I have to go home to that, and then I have to go to work and be . . .

Female Respondent: That's *(1:58:11.8 unclear/crosstalk)*.

Female Respondent: It was just my desk only, when you make your cubicle look like Hanukkah threw up, the figure it out. *(Laughter.)* I see it as oppressive and hateful. Let me have my Hanukkah stuff.

(1:58:35.5) DO YOU THINK THEY'RE PICKING ON YOU BECAUSE THEY KNOW YOU'RE JEWISH?

Female Respondent: Maybe, I don't know. I think he targeted me and a couple of other people he knew weren't super religious because there were other people, but he left three things on my desk, and one thing on another desk.

(1:58:58.4) YOU WERE LOW-HANGING FRUIT.

Female Respondent: Yes. *(Laughter.)* I was rebelling against the fact that everybody else made it look like Christmas threw up. *(Laughter.)* I was like, "You're going to be annoying with Christmas. I'm going to be annoying with Hanukkah."

Female Respondent: I think one thing about Evangelical Christians, the main thought I get, is just the power of an idea and the fact that, at least from what I know a lot of these Evangelical Christians, they really do just believe with all their heart in this doctrine. They're just very brainwashed by it and hypnotized by it, and they don't necessarily mean to be hateful or intolerant. I don't think many people necessarily mean to. They're just so wrapped up in that that's just their whole life and they can't see outside that. They have to touch people with that and they have to have other people know that because it makes them feel a certain way, so they want that for other people or whatever.

Female Respondent: I was wondering, I think it was close-minded personally, and I always wonder, because I have a lot of people come to my door. I don't know what it is about my neighborhood. *(Laughter.)* I always wonder, you're coming to my door, it would take a lot of guts and I'd probably never do that, but what if I did go to your door? What would they think? *(Laughter.)* If I gave them some flyer for whatever just trying to believe what I believe, I just wonder what would go through their minds. *(Laughter.)*

(2:00:35.7) IMAGINE YOU'RE TOLD SOMEBODY WHO IS WITH AN EVANGELICAL CHURCH WANTED YOU TO GO TO DINNER. WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM?

Female Respondent: Okay. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: *(2:00:56.6 unclear/crosstalk).*

Female Respondent: Good luck. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: Get drunk first. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Everyone should want to believe what they want to believe, and I think that's why we are so against that, is because they're telling us that we can't believe what we want to believe. It's like, "You want to believe that? Go for it."

(2:01:10.8) HOW WOULD YOU HELP HER?

Female Respondent: I would say be prepared.

Female Respondent: To brush it off. Just go to dinner. You shouldn't judge someone. You should not go to dinner because they are Christian.

Female Respondent: You're going as a neighbor. *(Several respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: You're not going as a recruit or as an agnostic promoter. You're going as a person. You want to go eat dinner with someone.

Female Respondent: I'd tell her that we're not going to talk about religion. *(Laughter.) (One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: My question is, did this person ask them to go to dinner so she could promote her, or was it just that she was going to dinner with this friend who happened to be Evangelical?

(2:01:49.7) JUST CASUALLY.

Female Respondent: Why not? *(Two respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I'd tell my friend or whoever, if you feel comfortable then have fun, but if you need an out I'll call you.

Female Respondent: If someone asks you to dinner, if they state, "I'm an Evangelical Christian and I want to talk to you about religion; let's go to dinner," I'd probably be like, "No thanks." *(Several respondents agreed.)* If they're just like, "Let's go to dinner," I'd be like, "Yes." If it comes out that they're that, that's fine.

Female Respondent: Let's go for a beer. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: It might not work. I have had people say that to me and I say, “I’m not really comfortable talking about it.” Sometimes this is how it makes them stop is generally I say, “And I’m probably going to offend you with the things I say.” That generally will make people stop. If it doesn’t, then you get up and leave. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

(2:02:52.6) WHAT IF SHE ASKS IF YOU WOULD GO TO CHURCH WITH HER?

Female Respondent: If one of my best friends came up to me and said that they wanted to go to church, I would secretly judge them, but I would say go for it.

(2:03:15.7) SHE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS.

Female Respondent: Changing the story.

Female Respondent: Yes, I would say, I would tell said person to do a little research. If you’re genuinely looking for a church, do a little research. See what fits you best. If this church fits you best, have at it. Honestly, I probably wouldn’t like them much anymore, but . . . *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: My ex-boss in Atlanta, she was always talking to me about religion, super pushy. She asked me to go to church a few times, and finally I was like, “Eh, all right.” It’s just another experience. It’s not anything. Just because you go doesn’t mean you’re going to believe. *(Several respondents agreed.)* It might just be a good show. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: If she’s going to try out that one church, you might recommend you should try that one and a couple more. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: If she wants to go to church with her, go to church with her. That’s her choice.

(2:04:11.7) YOU WOULDN’T CAUTION SOMEBODY?

Female Respondent: No.

Female Respondent: I’d say (2:04:15.2 *unclear/crosstalk*). *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Someone who knew nothing about it whatsoever?

Female Respondent: We’re talking about a little bunny.

Female Respondent: I would caution them. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: I wouldn’t say they’re bad. I would say, “Hey, if that’s the church then you should check it out, but just be aware. My experience, some people of that faith have very strong opinions and they might really want for you to believe the same thing, so just know that going in. It’s not anything personal. That just seems to be the culture of that faith.” *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: If they call you on stage and hit you on the head. *(Laughter.)*

Female Respondent: Then I would caution them that if you ever try to recruit me, that's going to be it. *(Laughter.)* You do what you want, but if you ever try to recruit me, we're done.

Female Respondent: I would try to figure out why they wanted to go to church too, what they were trying to look for. If they wanted a sense of community or if they had spiritual relations or dreams or something. That would probably make my advice change a little bit.

(2:05:19.6) KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HINDUISM?

Female Respondent: Uh-huh. *(Affirmative.)*

(2:05:25.3) A LITTLE BIT?

Female Respondent: A little.

(2:05:28.8) DO THEY BELIEVE IN OUT-THERE STUFF?

Female Respondent: Kind of.

(2:05:32.7) KIND OF?

Female Respondent: They have a God that's *(2:05:34.5 unclear)*. *(Two respondents agreed.)*

Female Respondent: What are you meaning by out there? I think all religions are.

(2:05:43.8) THINGS THAT ARE HEARD BY NOT SEEN, BELIEVING IN THINGS THAT . . . ?

Female Respondent: *(2:05:45.9 Unclear/crosstalk)*.

Female Respondent: I've studied many, many religions across the world, and every single one has its weird little thing.

Female Respondent: *(2:05:57.1 unclear/crosstalk)*.

Female Respondent: They all have to do with having faith in something. *(One respondent agreed.)*

Female Respondent: *(2:06:01.3 unclear/crosstalk)*.

Female Respondent: People of heavens and hells. You can't have a religion without that. It's something that, that's what religion is. Something you can't physically see and you need something to believe in beyond your physical life here.

Female Respondent: *(2:06:13.0 unclear/crosstalk)*.

Female Respondent: My experiences with Hinduism have always been positive. *(One respondent agreed.)* I've never had a Hindu come and . . .

Female Respondent: Not like Evangelicals.

Female Respondent: Try to convert you.

Female Respondent: (2:06:21.6 Unclear/crosstalk).

Female Respondent: Experience is walking around the fair at festivals or some sort of thing where I got some Hinduism books or whatever. It wasn't pushing at all like Christianity. It was really just (2:06:42.3 unclear/coughing). I think that it's also not that much of a presence in America. (One respondent agreed.) I think Christianity overshadows everything.

Female Respondent: I like religions that, like Hinduism, you just don't hear anything bad about them.

Female Respondent: They're peaceful.

Female Respondent: They're far more peaceful. (Two respondents agreed.) (Laughter.)

(2:07:04.5) ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

THANK YOU . . .