

DOLLY PARTON: 'Good deeds' and 'Bad Theology'

Much of the music-world was shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Dolly Parton on 25th August 2026 at the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Centre. On a BBC web site of that date - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/c0ry0yzxeyxt> these comments appeared

- "Dolly was glam, funny, and kind," says **Katy Perry**, as tributes pour in from around the world to Dolly Parton, who has died aged 80
- The country star died on Tuesday after a "brief battle with cancer", her management team says
- A world without Parton "doesn't feel possible, real, or right", says **Taylor Swift**, while **Sir Paul McCartney** calls her a "bubbly" character whose singing and songwriting were "unrivalled in the world of country music"
- Fans have been leaving flowers, balloons and cards, remembering a music icon who wrote over 3,000 songs and sold more than 100 million records - her career in numbers
- **Alongside the music, Parton also devoted decades of her life to charitable causes, particularly child literacy with millions gaining access to free books across five countries**

In the wake of her death there was much speculation about where Dolly would be spending eternity. During her life she had often professed to be a Christian, but was she a faithful Christian? That was certainly brought into question by some who published videos about her 'Christian beliefs'.

Let me deal firstly with Dolly's '**Good Deeds.**' We read above in the last comment I listed of how she **devoted decades of her life to charitable causes, particularly child literacy.** This cause was dear to her heart because of her own upbringing in poverty and with little access to books.

When speaking on the topic of '**Progressive Christianity**' a helpful book that I refer to and quote from is called '**Another Gospel?**' by **Alisa Childers**. When news of the death of Dolly Parton broke, **Alisa Childers** posted the following on her Facebook page on 26th August 2026 –

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library inspired my kids to love reading

When I was pregnant with my first, my husband and I were totally broke. Zoegirl had ended, and he was in between jobs. We could barely afford diapers, let alone buy children's books to read to our daughter. (Not complaining. We learned a lot during that time and God provided.) But ...

That's when I heard about Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Every kid (EVERY KID!) in TN could sign up to receive a free book every month until they were 5 years old. I signed up and every single month until my daughter was 5 (and later my son) we received a brand-new book. We wore them out. We read amazing books like Blueberries for Sal, The Snowy Day, Fernando (my daughter's favorite, and Milo and Otis (My son's favorite.)

I was so deeply impressed that a rich and famous person would see to it that every kid in TN had the opportunity to read, no matter their socio-economic status. I tear up thinking about it. I understand now that the Imagination Library has branched out to other states and even other countries.

I appreciated Dolly's songwriting and flawless voice, but even more than that, I am deeply grateful for the gift she gave to my kids. They are both excellent readers, and those books inspired a love of reading that continues in both of them to this day. Sad to hear of her passing. Thankful for her generous heart. Praying for her family and friends.



I think those words from **Alisa Childers** give testimony to some of the **'Good Deeds'** that can be rightly attributed to Dolly Parton. I suspect that many around the world, when thinking of these **'Good Deeds'** by Dolly, automatically think and assume that she will be spending eternity with God. But, who was Dolly's God?

This brings me to that last portion of the title of this article – **'Bad Theology.'** In Dr Alan Cairn's **'Dictionary of Theological Terms'** the word **'Theology'** is defined as follows – **'The systematic study of the being, attributes, purposes and works of God, and of the world, man, and history in relation to Him.'**

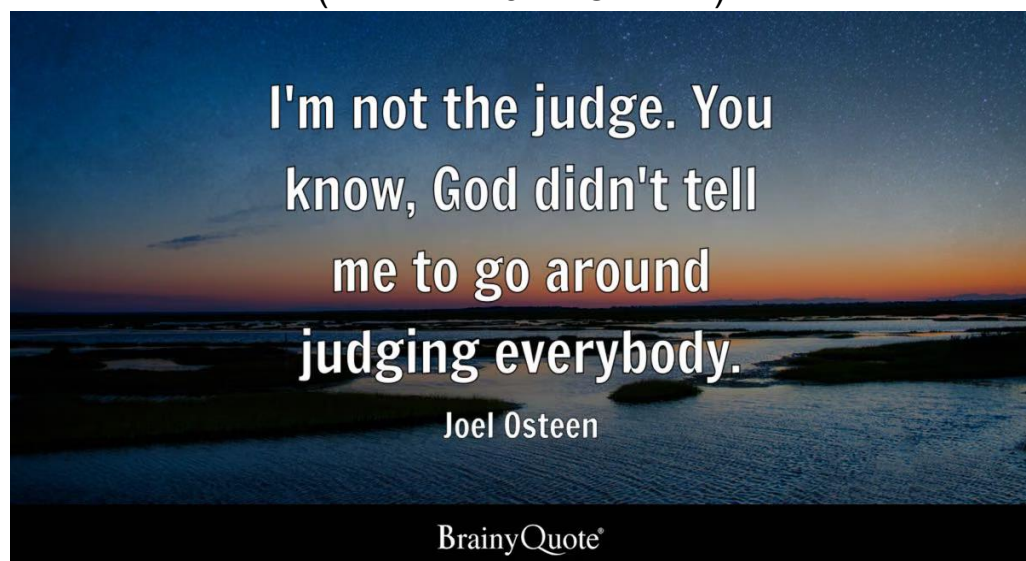
To understand who Dolly's God was we must of course refer to her own expressed understanding of her 'God'. To do that I will refer to several videos that were posted by Christians whose views I respect and in them they include segments of Dolly expressing her views on God and her understanding of 'His ways.'

Let me mention firstly a video put out by **KEN HAM** of **ANSWERS in GENESIS** which is located on –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogd8T528xuk>

Areas of concern that **KEN HAM** noted were her unscriptural views on

- (a) So-called SAME SEX MARRIAGE
- (b) Her view that we should not judge or criticise people
(rather like Joel Osteen!)



- (c) Her openness to possible ‘reincarnation’ – Her words **‘You know, if there's such a thing as reincarnation, I kind of believe all that kind of stuff. I'm just open to things. I think this not the end of me. I don't think it's the end of any of us. Yeah. I think we're recycled and if nothing else, we just go back into that great flow of divine energy.’**

Ken Ham’s closing summary is worth noting –

‘I think there's an important warning here for all of us. The issue isn't ultimately do I call myself a Christian. The issue is what is my ultimate authority? Do I start with God's word and judge the culture by scripture or do I start with the culture and then reinterpret God's word to accommodate what the culture teaches?’

Then secondly let me go to a video put out by **JUSTIN PETERS** of **JUSTIN PETERS MINISTRIES** who was my guest here for meetings in Northern Ireland some years ago. The video is located on –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwwLO5EewYo>

Areas of concern that **JUSTIN PETERS** noted were

- (a) The ready-willingness of many, including pastors to have immediately **‘ushered her (Dolly) right into heaven’**. **(Cecil – could I just say that many ‘liberals’ tell apologists like myself, Justin and Ken that we are not to ‘judge’ but surely their proclaiming that someone has gone to heaven is in itself pronouncing a ‘judgment’?)**
- (b) Like **KEN HAM**, **JUSTIN** raised concerns about her views on ‘matters LGBT’. On this issue, here are excerpts from an interview with Larry King. Larry King said **‘Didn't you recently though throw support to uh the LGBT community?’** Dolly replied **‘they've made me the poster child. I think only because I'm so outspoken as far as just being accepting of people in general. I do not believe that we should criticize and judge other people. I think we should be accepting and loving. We are all God's children. we are who we are and we should allow be allowed to be who we are.’** (Cecil – we are NOT all God’s children – we only become a Child of God when we are born again” and “adopted” into God’s family). **JUSTIN** then goes on to explain that Dolly’s views are in direct conflict with what God’s Word teaches in Romans chapter 1.

(c) Larry King asked Dolly if other Christians **'take umbrage'** with her views on **'matters LGBT'** and this was her response **'Oh, absolutely they did. Oh, yes. I get it all the time. I keep saying, "Well, if you're the fine Christian that you're you think you are, why are you judging people? Why are you uh that's God's job. We're not God. We're not judges. You know, we're supposed to love one another. We're supposed to not judge (Cecil – FALSE – see Matthew 7:15, Acts 20: 28-30 linked with Revelation 2:1-2', 1 John 4: 1, Galatians 2: 11-14 and in Acts 17: 11 believers who are 'Scriptural Fact-Checkers' are commended') and we're not supposed to take vengeance on other people That's God's job (Cecil – TRUE – Romans 12:19). So, I, I got too much to do on my own. Try to do God's work, too. I mean, not to, you know, to get into trying to do all that. So, yeah, I have to I I suffer for everything I do. I'm not out to make any, you know, I just think that we should be more loving, more caring. We are who we are. If you're gay, you're gay. If you're straight, you're straight. And you should be allowed to be, you know, how you are and who you are.** (Cecil – 'Doing what is right in our own eyes?' Judges 21:25) Justin's response was to direct attention to God's Word as found in **1st Corinthians 6: 9-11** which stand in complete opposition to what Dolly said. Justin mentioned **Romans 14:22** which says **"Happy is he (or 'she' also) that condemneth not himself (or 'herself' also) in that thing which he alloweth"**.

Justin concluded by saying –

'As best I know she died in these profoundly unbiblical beliefs barring some deathbed conversion of which we are not aware and of which there is no record. Dolly Parton died believing that the Bible was not true. She rejected large portions of the Bible. It's not that she didn't know what the Bible says. She just rejected it. She didn't like it and so she rejected it. And so, it can't be said that she truly loved Jesus. Not the Jesus of the Bible ... Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." So, Dolly Parton may have professed some kind of faith in some kind of Jesus, but it was not the Jesus of the Bible. She essentially ... created a false Jesus. She created an idol and she worshiped that idol just like you would worship a Buddha or a golden calf or whatever was not the Jesus of the Bible.'

A couple of other areas of concern not mentioned by either **Ken Ham** or **Justin Peters** would include the following –

In an interview with a lady called Terry Gross, Dolly spoke of her early church-life and in the course of it made this statement –

“I think it’s a sin if you believe it to be, and if it hurts somebody else, it’s a sin.”

You can listen to that between 5.24 and 6.34 on this link –

<https://freshairarchive.org/segments/dolly-parton-fresh-air-interview>

That means, according to what Dolly said, that humans get to decide what constitutes sin, that is **‘subjective’**, decided by oneself.

God’s Word tells a different story with this **‘objective’**, external truth –

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” — 1 John 3:4

In **2025** Dolly and another musician called **Zac Brown** had a conversation on a range of issues that can be viewed on this link –

<https://www.interviewmagazine.com/music/dolly-parton-in-conversation-with-zac-brown>

Here’s an extract from that conversation –

BROWN: ... Is there anything that you would say to somebody that’s starting out and wants to follow their passion and their love?

PARTON: ... I have a saying of my own that says, “Find out who you are and do it on purpose.” I think you’ve got to find out who that person is, and you’ve got to protect that little person. Don’t let somebody lead you astray. And if you are of a spiritual nature, like I am, I lean on that higher wisdom, that higher knowledge, and I draw from that. So, if you don’t even believe in god, you need to believe in something greater than yourself, but be thankful for it and draw all the good energies to keep you strong and to keep you anchored.

That is not advice that would be given by any faithful Christian. In Christian terms we only have a Christian **spiritual nature** if we have been “**born again**” and thereafter the **higher wisdom** and **higher knowledge** that we ‘draw’ on is found alone in God’s Word which is absolute, objective truth.

Where is someone that doesn’t **even believe in god** supposed to turn to **believe in something greater than yourself**, and what are these so-called **good energies** that an atheist can ‘draw’ on to keep them **strong** and **anchored**? A genuine and faithful Christian knows that there is only one reliable and trustworthy **‘anchor’** as we read in **Hebrews 6: 19-20** –

“Which hope we (Christians) have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, EVEN Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”.

In conclusion, I can only say that Dolly Parton’s ‘Christianity’ was a mish-mash that included so-called ‘Progressive Christianity’, scripture contradicting and scripture denying views, and others that embraced elements of Hinduism and Pantheism.

Dolly was certainly not a ‘Christian role-model’ for anyone to try and ape – **‘Take Heed’**.