



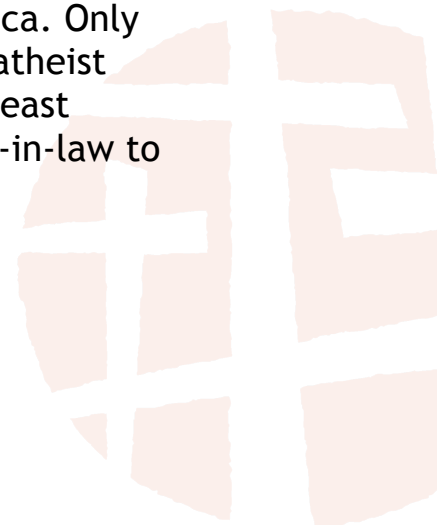
**ATHEISM VERSUS CHRISTIANITY: WHICH WAY DOES THE
EVIDENCE POINT?**

A Reasonable Faith - Part 1
Pastor Keith Stewart
March 14, 2021

1. ATHEISTS AND THE OBJECTIONS THEY RAISE

“Telephone surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019 show that 4% of American adults say they are atheists when asked about their religious identity, up from 2% in 2009. An additional 5% of Americans call themselves agnostics, up from 3% a decade ago.” - Michael Lipka, Pew Research

“Atheists are one of the most disliked groups in America. Only 45% of Americans say they would vote for a qualified atheist presidential candidate, and atheists are rated as the least desirable group for a potential son-in-law or daughter-in-law to belong to.” - Scientific American (01/17/12)



“When one person suffers from a delusion it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion it is called religion.” - Richard Dawkins

❑ Can you acknowledge truth when you hear it?

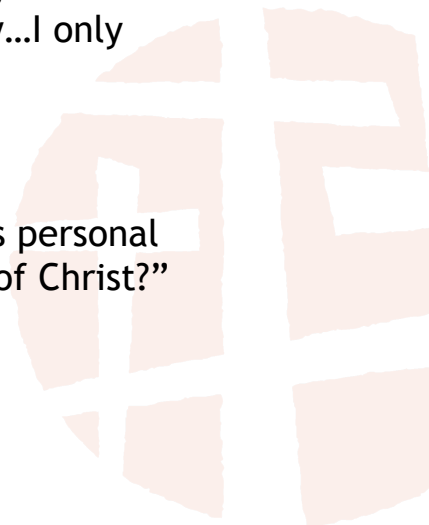
“There’s a phrase we live by in America: ‘In God We Trust’. It’s right there where Jesus would want it: on our money.” - Bill Maher

“I’ve never been insulted by hateful Satanists for not believing in their devil. Only by loving Christians for not believing in their God.” - Ricky Gervais

“I’ll pray for you” = “I want some credit for caring, without actually having to do anything that takes any effort or that actually works.” - Ricky Gervais

“@MTVNews: Beyonce, Rihanna & Katy Perry send prayers to #Oklahoma #PrayForOklahoma” I feel like an idiot now...I only sent money.” - Ricky Gervais

“How can anyone think that destroying someone else’s personal property is the best way to win them over to the way of Christ?”



❑ Issues that need clarifying

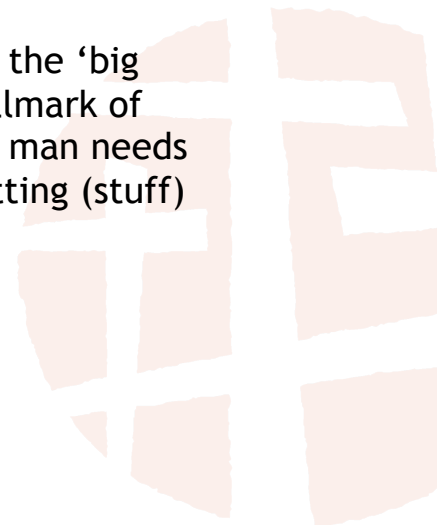
- Proof versus Evidence

“You will understand that my atheism was inevitably based on what I believed to be the findings of the sciences and those findings, not being a scientist, I had to take on trust, in fact, on authority.” - C. S. Lewis

- Doubt versus Certainty

“Whether your faith is that there is a God or that there is not a God, if you don’t have any doubts you are either kidding yourself or asleep. Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith. They keep it awake and moving.” - Frederick Buechner

“The only appropriate attitude for man to have about the ‘big questions’ is not the arrogant certitude that is the hallmark of religion, but doubt. Doubt is humble. And that’s what man needs to be, considering human history is just a litany of getting (stuff) dead wrong!” - Bill Maher



2. *WHY ATHEISTS DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD*

- ❑ Bad personal experience with church or Christians

“If it weren’t for Christians, I’d be a Christian.”
- Mahatma Gandhi

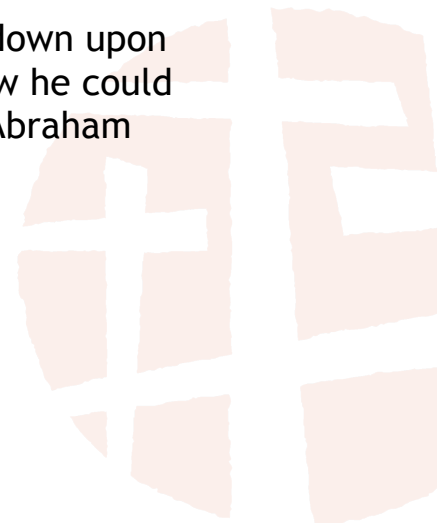
“The greatest cause of atheism is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door and deny him with their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.” - Brennan Manning

- ❑ Difficulty reconciling a good God with a broken world

“You can’t just say there is a god because the world is beautiful. You have to account for bone cancer in children.” - Stephen Fry

“I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God.” - Abraham Lincoln

- ❑ Ulterior motive



"I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning: Consequently assumed that it had none, and was able to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics (the study of being and the origin of the cosmos); he is also concerned to prove there is no valid reason to prove he should not do as he wants to...For myself, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation, sexual and political." - Aldous Huxley

- ❑ Personal tragedies

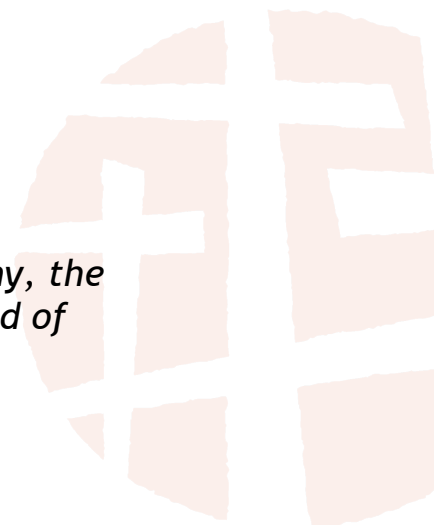
- ❑ Defective father relationship

- ❑ Intellectual objections to the Bible

"The Bible will be extinct in 100 years." - Voltaire

3. FINDING BRIDGES, COMMONALITIES AND LOVE

The longer Paul waited in Athens for Silas and Timothy, the angrier he got--all those idols! The city was a junkyard of idols. Acts 17.16 (The Message)



So Paul took his stand in the open space at the Areopagus and laid it out for them. "It is plain to see that you Athenians take your religion seriously. When I arrived here the other day, I was fascinated with all the shrines I came across. And then I found one inscribed, TO THE GOD NOBODY KNOWS. I'm here to introduce you to this God so you can worship intelligently, know who you're dealing with." Acts 17.22-23 (Message)

Paul didn't see this city as a battlefield. He saw it as a mission field.

God overlooks it as long as you don't know any better--but that time is past. The unknown is now known, and he's calling for a radical life-change. He has set a day when the entire human race will be judged and everything set right. And he has already appointed the judge, confirming him before everyone by raising him from the dead. Acts 17.30-31

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil... 2 Timothy 2.24-26

...Wisdom...is peace-loving and courteous. It allows discussion and is willing to yield to others; it is full of mercy and good deeds. It is wholehearted and straightforward and sincere. James 3.17 (Living Bible)



It takes as much faith to believe in no God as it does to believe in God.

“There's plenty of solid evidence for anyone who wants to believe, but enough faith is required to still render it a [personal] choice and not a coerced decision... not forced behavior from robots.” - Greg Boyd, Letters from a Skeptic

"God is obvious enough, so that those who want to see Him can see Him but hidden enough so that those who don't want to see Him can avoid Him." - Greg Boyd, Letters from a Skeptic

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways were you encouraged or challenged by today's message?

2. Negative experiences with churches or Christians is a common theme among atheists. As Pastor Keith explained, sometimes atheism isn't just an intellectual belief system but sometimes an expression of profound wounding - at times from the environment of home and other times from the environment of church. With this understanding, how does it affect the way you view the atheist? Or how you approach and converse with an atheist? Or even affect the way you evaluate approaches that only try to answer the intellectual questions raised by the atheist? Evaluate the efficacy of approaches that only try to answer the intellectual questions raised by the atheist.

3. The apostle Paul is a perfect example of someone who cared passionately about those trapped in erroneous beliefs and practices. He built bridges of understanding to those who were far from God through use of what he had seen and read that were important to them. If we follow his example, besides the Bible we would use books, movies and music to share the love of Christ with others. Think and try to list some of the movie scenes, quotes and lyrics that are about other topics entirely but speak to us about God's love and His heart to redeem us.

4. Have you ever personally known an atheist? What were they like? What were their biggest sticking points with the Christian faith? How were they treated?

