

Unit 9: Atheists and Agnostics

Unit Introduction

In this unit we will examine the arguments and claims of atheists and agnostics, and look at some evidence and proofs of the truths of God's Word. You will then be able to use these proofs to share Christ with an atheist or agnostic. Many of them have never heard that God loves them; rather, they base their beliefs off of the concept of an unloving, vengeful God that is just waiting for them to mess up. When you can share God's love with them, and help them to see that the God they claim to not believe in, loves them so much that He died for them, it can often break down the walls of atheism.

Unit Outline

Unit 9: Atheists and Agnostics

Lesson 21: Atheists and Agnostics, part 1

Lesson 22: Atheists and Agnostics, part 2

Lesson 21: Atheists & Agnostics Part 1

One common fear in witnessing is, “What if I get an atheist? How can I prove to them that there is a God?” In this lesson we will look at some of the reasons atheists give for not believing in a God. Often, they really do believe, but are bitter toward God for one reason or another. Many times, if you can take the time to show them that you care about them, they will start to see God in your life.

We will also begin to take a look at some proofs of the Bible that you can use when witnessing. The Bible proves itself over and over again, and when a person will take an open and honest look at what the Bible has to say, they will either cease to be an atheist, or they will cease to be honest.

Lesson 21: Atheists & Agnostics Part 1

Topic 1: Introduction to Atheism

Topic 2: Reasons for Unbelief

The Phoniness of Religion

God is Unknowable

Topic 3: Reasons for Belief

Proofs of Intelligent Design

Proving a Negative

The Lack of Character

Topic 4: Reasons to Believe the Bible

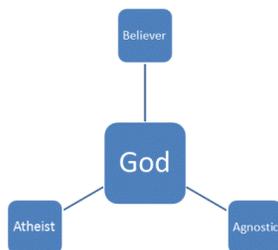
It Claims God Wrote It

It Contains Prophecy

False Prophecy Doesn't Happen

It Declares Beforehand

Topic 1: Introduction to Atheism



Is it better to say you know there isn't a God or you're not sure if there is or not? Since atheism seems to be an intentional blindness and a more dogmatic position, it's probably easier to reach an agnostic. They at least aren't in any settled position and may be more open to the gospel.

You've heard me say this before, but atheism has to be taught. You will never go into a tribe and find a tribe of atheists. They've never found one. Atheism has to be taught, and it's a blindness. And I think it's people that want to be blind. I don't think it's something that's a natural blindness, but I think it's something that people want to be blind. Believe me, a child knows there is a God. One time, I knew a family, the dad was an atheist; the mom was an atheist, and we asked them if their son was an atheist, and they said, “Well, we haven't discussed it.” So we asked the child, the child said he believed in a God. Atheism has to be taught, and I

want us to be able to look. I think you have your verses. I want you to see very clearly that—how do we know, how do we know from the Bible that the Bible is the Word of God? How do you deal with an atheist in that sense?

QUESTION 1

How is atheism usually adopted as a personal belief? Answer: _____

- A. It has to be taught
- B. It is adopted by default
- C. It is arrived at by logic
- D. It is the natural belief of all non-Christians

QUESTION 2

Many unknown tribes that missionaries meet are atheistic in their beliefs. *True or False?*

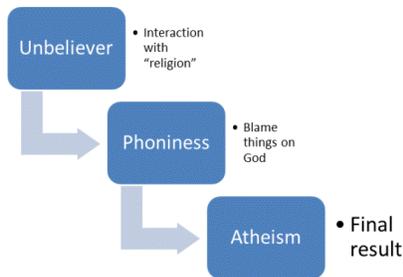
Answer: _____

QUESTION 3

Atheism seems to be a willing blindness. *True or False?*

Answer: _____

Topic 2: Reasons for Unbelief



Atheists and agnostics, especially if they feel they're somewhat intellectual or scientific, like to derisively say that Christians accept things by faith. What they mean is that there is scientific truth and that's what they believe without prejudice. But Christians blindly deny that truth to follow the teachings of the Bible. They try to make it look like Christians believe things there is no good reason to believe; that they believe despite the truth. Yet they only believe

what is demonstrable truth. Yet, truth be told, their position takes more "faith", that is it strains against reason, than faith in God and the Bible does.

The Phoniness of Religions

Many people are "atheist" or "agnostics" because of what they've seen they think is the phoniness in Christendom. It's not the phoniness in Christendom; it's the phoniness in religion. Religion is different than Christendom because religions are man-made and Christendom, of course, is God-made. Things like the Dark Ages—they like to blame all the wars on religious wars. You know that's really not true, but all the things they try to blame on Christendom, it's not true. They blame all this, and when you're dealing with an atheist, an atheist says, "Oh no, you can't prove God." But when you are witnessing to a skeptical person, first of all, remember to be nice, because many people have not been nice to them, and they have seen tremendous fallacies in what they think is Christendom. Christ is a Savior Who was not a hypocrite. He was a Person of tremendous sincerity, and we need to be able to show this to people.

QUESTION 5

The people who become agnostics because of the phoniness of Christians really mean the phoniness of religions. *True or False?*

Answer: _____

QUESTION 6

When you are witnessing to a skeptical person, remember to be firm and direct. *True or False?*

Answer: _____

God is Unknowable

Assignment

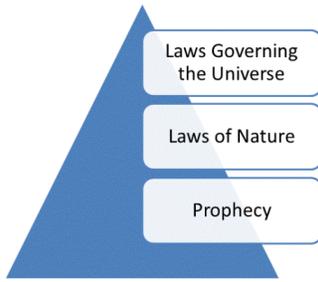
- Please Memorize Psalms 14:1

If you will look in the first Psalm that I've given you, the verses, in Psalm 14:1—I'm going to skip down to the second part of it, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." The fool. Now a fool is a person that doesn't have all his marbles. That's a fool. And that kind of a person that says there is no God. But most people are not atheists or agnostics. An agnostic is a person that's just not sure there's a God. They're not sure that it can be decided if there's a God. An agnostic is a person that just doesn't know for sure. They really are saying they're ignorant. And a lot of times these college students say, "Well I'm an agnostic," and I say, "I can see that." What are some of the reasons that we believe in a God? Creation requires, number one, a Creator. The owner of a wristwatch knows there's a creator of the watch. Intelligent thought and effort were required to make the watch. There's nobody on Earth that could believe that that watch, or any watch that you have here, was not created by a God. How about our bodies? How could anything this complex, or this immense universe, this tremendous, and you look at that and you say, "There's no way you could not believe in a God." Each of those stars, most of them are bigger than our own sun, and you look at them and you say, "How could you not believe in a God?" But you look at those and you see them. You say, "Man, how magnificent." We went over to Pelican Island, and that particular day there was about 100 pelicans, white pelicans. White pelicans aren't like the ones in Florida—they go with their flock to catch the fish, and they fly together, and they get the fish into the shore. Then they eat the fish, and they work together. How do you think that could ever happen except by a God? And then we had an eagle, and we got right up on the eagle, and the eagle had a white head and a white tail, and it jumps out of a tree and it comes right over our boat, flies and comes back and comes right back over our boat again. And you see the magnificence of the eagle, and you say, "How could anybody not believe in a God?" It doesn't take a lot of intelligence to believe in a God. I tell you what, it takes more faith to believe there is no God than to believe there is a God. A whole lot more faith.

QUESTION 8

A person who is sure there is not a God is called a(n) _____ .

Topic 3: Reasons for Belief



The people Christ interacted with were not atheists. They may have had other issues, but the Jews and Samaritans and the people of the nations surrounding them all believed in a god. So he never had to prove there was a God. That task was left to Paul and other missionaries as they reached out with the gospel to a non-theistic world (Romans 1:18-32).

It took intelligence, and you think about all the different animals God created—what intelligence that it took. The magnificence of our God. There's laws governing the universe, laws of gravity, motion, seasons, tides, wind circuits—these laws presuppose a Lawgiver. Our universe had design, and had to have a Designer. We talked about Jim Irwin, the great astronaut that was on the moon, and when he was on the moon is when he got saved. He had a tremendous Christian testimony. And he said he looked at the earth and he realized the earth was different than anything he'd ever seen. And he knew that there had to be a God, and he trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior. Exciting. Because how could you be on the moon and look at that tremendous earth, and not believe there is a God? The Bible had to be written by God, further in the chapter, we shall mention reasons why we know the Bible to be the Word of God. We're going to give you scientific facts in the next couple weeks. The very fact that the Bible was written proves that there has to be a higher Intelligence guiding the writers. This Bible, written over 1,600 years by 40 different writers, but one author. This Bible totally dovetails together. This Bible says everything's going to happen before it happens, and we're going to see some of these things in the next week.

QUESTION 10

How do the laws of gravity, motion, seasons, tides and winds show a creator?

QUESTION 11

Where did Jim Irwin get saved? Answer: _____

- A. At home with a telescope
- B. At mission control in Houston
- C. In the lunar module
- D. On the moon

QUESTION 12

Approximately how many human writers wrote the Bible? Answer: _____

- A. Four
- B. Twenty
- C. Forty
- D. Sixty six

Proving a Negative

A person who doesn't believe in God will have to face the problem of trying to prove or substantiate a negative. It's very hard to do that. Here is why. How can a person prove there is no God? First of all, they can't. They will agree with that. Has this person been everywhere within and without the universe? You say, "Well what do you mean, 'without'? There's only one universe." Well, does it end? Well, if it ends, how does end—with a wall? Then what's on the other side of the wall? It doesn't end. It's more than we can comprehend, but that's why every single tribe in the world has always believed in a God. Everyone. Everyone. If there's somewhere he has not been, God might be there, so he can't prove there is no God. Does this person know everything? Then what this person doesn't know could be where God is. Thousands of Christians testify they know God, and they know Him personally. You say, "Well, what does that mean?" Well, if you talked to thousands of people and they said they knew someone personally, wouldn't you happen to believe it would be true? You say, "But Mohammedans and all them believe in God, too." But they don't believe in it like a born-again Christian does. There's a big difference. And of course, we know other religions have no prophecy. Only the Bible has prophecy.

QUESTION 13

It is possible to prove there is NO God. *True or False?*

Answer: _____

QUESTION 14

Which of the following is distinctive to Christianity? Answer: _____

- A. Fellowship
- B. Good works
- C. Prophecy
- D. Sacrifice

The Lack of Character

Usually, a person that's atheistic or agnostic feels that they're very scientific. Not always, but usually. They're not, but they feel like they're very scientific. But they reject the testimony of thousands of people. You've never seen a hospital ever built by atheists. Have you ever gone to Atheists Memorial Hospital? Atheists have never been known for their giving out of their money. The world's not been helped by atheists. And atheists have not helped themselves. Anytime you have a little bit of a doubt, and you see the wonders of God's creation, and you see these things, you say, "Man, there had to be a Designer." What a God that we have, and it is a tremendous thing. It really is. If a person says he doesn't believe the Bible, tell him the gospel. Go ahead and give him the gospel. Maybe he doesn't believe the Bible because he doesn't understand the plan of salvation. He thinks he'll be sent to Hell anyway. If this is the case, you probably could lead him to the Lord without ever having to go and prove the Bible. A lot of people just say these things, and they're not really. They're searching, so always try to give the plan of salvation. Don't let it delay you.

QUESTION 15

It is characteristic of atheists to build hospitals as an example of their concern for humanity. *True or False?*

Answer: _____

QUESTION 16

If a person says he does not believe the Bible it is a waste of time to give him the gospel. *True or False?*

Answer: _____

Topic 4: Reasons to Believe the Bible



The Bible was written over a period of at least 1600 years. Moses was the earliest author and he wrote during the 1400s BC. But Moses probably used written records that may have gone all the way back to the time of Adam who lived at least six thousand years ago. If that was true, the Bible was written over about a 4100 year period. For all the New Testament was written during the first century AD.

Of the forty authors, all but one were Jews. The only non-Jew was Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Yet despite the vast of time it was written over, it all was determined inspired by God and it has one consistent message.

It Claims God Wrote It

Now here's some reasons for believing the Bible, and I think these are pretty important reasons, and I want us to be able to see them. I think they're very important. If you'll look at Jeremiah 32 and Jeremiah 30:4, "Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write all these words that I have spoken unto thee in a book, and these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah." And we're talking about the Bible. Let's look down at Ezekiel 1:3, "The word of the Lord came unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Uzzi in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Shebar and the hand of the Lord was there upon him." The Word of the Lord, see. The Bible claimed to be written by God. If the men who wrote the Bible hadn't been inspired of God, they would have recanted under great persecution they received, but they didn't. Men are not willing to die for something they know to be untrue. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said something like this, "The Bible was written by" —and I think this is a real good thing—"[A.] Good men, B. Bad men, or C. God. A. If good men wrote the Bible then claimed it was written by the inspiration of God, they would be liars, and liars are not good men. They would be deceivers and good men don't purposely deceive people. If bad men wrote the Bible, they would be condemning themselves because the Bible condemns sin. Bad men tend to justify themselves, but the Bible never justifies sin. Bad men couldn't have written the Bible because the Bible is a good book." Now this is good logic. Now the more you think on this, this is good logic. "Who did write the Bible? The only other choice—God. Neither good men nor bad men wrote the Bible; the only Person left is God. God wrote the Bible and it is a masterpiece of His handiwork." Do you know what it means to say God wrote this Bible? And yet there's no book in all the world so powerful.

QUESTION 18

Please briefly explain why the Bible had to be written by good men.

It Contains Prophecy

Assignment:

- Please memorize Deuteronomy 18:22.

The Bible contains true prophecy, history written before it happens, and so much of it that [it] is one of the biggest proofs that the Bible is the Word of God. It tells you what's going to happen before it happens. Now if you'll look at Deuteronomy 18:21 and 22, "And if thou say in thy heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?" Deuteronomy 18:22, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. Thou shalt not be afraid of him." In other words, when a prophet of God speaks and it doesn't happen, they're not of God. God never has made a mistake. When God said that the Jews would be back in the land, and everybody laughed, Hitler tried to annihilate and exterminate every single Jew because the Jews were God's chosen people. Oh, I tell you, what an incredible thing if you look at the Jews. When God says it, it's going to happen. Always the biggest events in the world are centered around Israel, isn't it? Have you ever noticed that? There can be millions killed in other countries and China and other countries, but two or three killed in the Golan Heights, or in the Gaza Strip, or in the West Bank, and it's worldwide news. It proves the Bible, doesn't it?

QUESTION 20

The Bible predicted the historically recent return of Israel to the land. *True or False?*

Answer: _____

False Prophecy Doesn't Happen

Assignment:

- Please memorize Jeremiah 23:28-29

When God says it, if it doesn't happen, then God didn't say it. Now I want to read you quite a few verses. In Jeremiah, I want us to look if you would, please, at Jeremiah 23:25. "I have heard what the prophet has said that prophecy lies in my name, saying I have dreamed I have dreamed," 26, "How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? Yea, they are prophets of deceit of their own heart, which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophets that hath a dream, let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces? Therefore behold I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord that use their tongues and say, he saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness, yet I sent them not, nor command them, therefore there shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." The Lord put in this book everything that He wanted, every single thing. And so many times, though, Christians don't take that simple book. Christians don't read that simple book, and they get themselves in more trouble. If you would read this book, if you would come to church, if you would do those things, you wouldn't need anything else but this book. It's got it, and it's so simple.

It Declares Beforehand

Assignment:

- Please memorize Isaiah 46:9-10

If you'll look at Isaiah 46:9, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God: and there is none else. I am God, and there is none like me." Isaiah 46:10, "Declaring the end from the beginning and the ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying My counsel shall stand, that I will do all my pleasure." John 14:29, "And I now have told you before it come to pass, that when it come to pass, you might believe." That's why God said, "Look, I'm going to tell you what's going to happen. I'm going to tell you there's going to be a treaty made with Israel." You know, people used to say, "What do you mean, 'a treaty made with Israel'? Well, Israel doesn't even have the land. The Jew is not even in the land." And the Bible said, "But they will return." And they returned. Boy I tell you, if I was an atheist, I wouldn't get a lot of sleep on that one, would you? Well, it's a coincidence. And then the preachers get up and say, "And yes, there's going to be a treaty. There's going to be a one-world government. There's going to be a one-world religion in the end." Believe me, a lot of this is going to happen when that Rapture takes place because they're going to be so shocked. Look at Isaiah 48:3, "I have declared the former things from the beginning, and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them I did them suddenly, and they came to pass." Everything that God says never—I am so convinced the Bible is the Word of God. Listen, I do not have even one inkling of a doubt. Seriously, if I were to die right now, I have no fear, no fear. There's not a question in my mind. There it is. You go out of this, into this, and you're going to see it. We sing, "Wilderness camp is great down here, but Heaven is better than this." It is. Heaven is better than this. Man, I tell you. We've got a God.

Two professors, one was a Christian professor, and the atheist. And the atheist always ridiculed the Christian. So he went to the school shop and had a globe of the world made. And he had one made of walnut. And this globe had all the detail, and he takes it in to the atheist professor and lets him see it, and he says, "My, who in the world made that?" And the Christian professor said, "No one." The atheist hadn't caught on yet. And he says, "Who made it?" And he said, "No one." "Someone had to [have] made it." And the Christian says "You're right. Someone had to make the globe." The atheist says, "I see what you're trying to get across." Isn't that beautiful? They would believe that that had to be made, but they don't believe this had to be made. I don't know if there's words I can get this down on a level that we can understand. To say that this just happens, but that had to be made. But see, that's the problem with atheism, atheism does not take brains; it takes a fool. It takes a fool.

"The fool has said in his heart there is no God." Nevertheless be kind. I witnessed to an atheist down in Florida, and I was with Rance Derrity. This guy was fishing. We used to live right down there on Biscayne Bay in Miami. We were right by the ocean. So one night, I went down. We were witnessing, and this guy said, "I'm an atheist." And he's looking at the ocean. I said, "Where'd the water come from?" Another night we went down there, and he had his grandson. Boy I tell you, you think I wasn't scared this night. I said "Bill, you kind of waylay him, and you be witnessing to him, and I'll talk to his grandson and try to get him saved." So we took his grandson up close to our apartment, and gave him the gospel, and the grandson got saved. And boy, the thought of the granddad, I thought he was going to kill us. The grandson said, "I've just trusted Jesus." He said, "You can't, there is no God." He said, "I've just trusted Jesus." It didn't phase him. Where did the water come from, where did all those species of fish that they can't even identify come from? Where did all this happen? How did it happen? It happened because of a God, a great God.

QUESTION 24

In John 14:29 Jesus claims to be able to tell the future. *True or False?*

Answer: _____

Lesson 21 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1

A. It has to be taught [Children do not become atheists on their own.]

QUESTION 2: False [Missionaries never find tribes of atheists.]

QUESTION 3: True [It is people that want to be blind, not natural blindness.]

QUESTION 4: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

Christianity is God-made while religion is man-made.

QUESTION 5: True [Atheists like to blame all the wars on religion.]

QUESTION 6: False [Because many people have not been nice to them, they have an incorrect conception of what they think is Christianity.]

QUESTION 7: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

“To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good”.

QUESTION 8: Atheist

QUESTION 9

<i>Example</i>	<i>Intelligence</i>
Creation	This requires a creator
Wristwatch	This requires careful thought and effort
Human body	The complexity of this requires a creator
Stars	Most of these are bigger than our sun
White pelicans	These exhibit flock behavior

QUESTION 10: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

The fact that there are laws that govern these things and that they all work together shows there is a designer or law-giver.

QUESTION 11

D. On the moon [This was his response to seeing the beauty of the earth from the moon.]

QUESTION 12

C. Forty [Yet the consistency of the message points to its one divine author.]

QUESTION 13: False [A person who does not believe in God has to face the problem of trying to prove or substantiate a negative.]

QUESTION 14

C. Prophecy [Only the Bible has prophecy.]

QUESTION 15: False [Atheists have never been known for giving their money.]

QUESTION 16: False [A person may not believe the Bible because he does not understand the plan of salvation and thinks he will be sent to hell anyway.]

QUESTION 17

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Teaching</i>
Jeremiah 30:2	The God of Israel commanded Jeremiah to write down his words in a book.
Jeremiah 30:4	These are the words God spoke of Israel and Judah.
Ezekiel 1:3	The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel and his hand was upon him

QUESTION 18: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

The claims to inspiration by God would be lies and they would be bad men. But if bad men wrote the Bible they would be condemning themselves while usually bad men try to justify themselves.

QUESTION 19: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

“When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

QUESTION 20: True [The Bible contains true prophecy, which is history written before it happens. It is one of the biggest proofs that the Bible is the Word of God.]

QUESTION 21: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

“The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD”. “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”

QUESTION 23: *Your answer should be similar to the following:*

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

QUESTION 24: True [This is identical to what God claims in Isaiah 46:9-10.]