

For the interviewing of a irreligious person, I chose a double date with my wife, her friend, Shirley, and her husband Chris. While I still reminded them that I was preparing for ministry, I wanted the setting to be more informal and relational focused rather than feeling like an interview. To add to the informality of it, we met in a coffee shop and even continued our conversation through to a different lunch spot. It was also fun to strategize prior to the conversation with my wife as she was excited to be a part of the discussion. For context, Shirley considers herself an atheist while her husband Chris considers himself a Roman Catholic.

Upon asking the question, “If I were to speak to you or your family about God, how would you like me to represent Him?” Shirley stated that she was confused by the question. After clarifying the question, she proceeded to talk about religion in general. After attempting multiple times to rephrase the question throughout different parts of our conversation, I realized that she had little to no understanding of who God is. How I realized this was because she: kept avoiding talking about God and kept re-directing the conversation about religion and seemed confused when we asked her what she thought about God. She seemed to equate God with religion (later confirmed by stating that she does not believe that there is a God). My wife later confirmed my suspicions. Instead of trying to re-direct the conversation about who is God and how would she like Him to be represented, I asked questions about her beliefs about religion and about what she understood about Christianity. This is when our conversation began to flow more smoothly.

By shifting the conversation in this direction, this seemed to open up the conversation more. Shirley clearly had strong beliefs about religion. What my wife and I expected was that she would be averse to religion and Christianity. What was surprising was that she was very supportive of it. She began a discourse on the many beneficial sociological and psychological

aspects of organized religion as a human construct. Among the many benefits that she spoke of, she commented that religion helped build and develop communities and their bonds, provided people with a sense of purpose, and that it taught people morality and discipline. She went so far to say that she would push for her future children to practice any kind of organized religion for the benefits (with letting her husband Chris handle that aspect). Overall, she seemed excited to share her thoughts about the benefits of organized religion.

On the other hand, she mentioned two aspects that she did not like about organized religion. One was that people use religion as a crutch in life instead “thinking for and believing in themselves.” This was a curious statement for her to make because it contradicted some of the benefits that she lauded about religion (such as teaching people about morality, discipline, and purpose). I explored this contradiction with nonconfrontational questions. What was missing from her answers was that she ultimately believed in herself and her abilities in life.

The other part was about God. She offered that she did not believe in God or in any god from any religion. She believes that mankind made up gods to control people. When I asked her why she believed this, her initial answer was interesting: from a TV show that she admired in her childhood. After all of us had a good laugh about this, she admitted that her mother had expressed to her multiple times that, “I don’t believe in God, I believe in myself.” This shaped her view of God early in life that stuck through adulthood. In fact, her view stopped at the fact that she didn’t believe that He exists. There was no rhyme or reason beyond what I just mentioned.

Overall, while I did not receive an answer to the assigned question, I learned a great deal about her, her husband’s view on God, and about how people can appreciate religion and leave God out of it.