

Defending the Faith – The Case for a Creator

Lesson 2 – “The Implications of Atheism” January 12, 2020

Ecclesiastes 2: 11 (ESV) ¹¹ *Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.*

The most important question mankind can ask is, “Does God exist?”

Our society significantly underestimates the implications of atheism. We live in a society where we have become somewhat desensitized to the whole subject of God’s existence. In essence, we often take the fact of God’s existence for granted.

By examining and fully understanding the consequences of atheism, we equip ourselves with the ability to confront family members and friends with the horrible realities of a Godless existence. Hopefully serving as a deterrent to the adoption of such a belief system.

Meaning – Having to do with significance...why something matters.

Value – Having to do with good and evil, right and wrong.

Purpose – Having to do with a goal, a reason for something.

The purpose of this lesson is to establish that if there is no God, then **meaning, value** and **purpose** are ultimately human illusions.

If atheism is true, then life is truly **objectively** meaningless, valueless and purposeless, despite our **subjective** beliefs to the contrary.

Given such a worldview, it is impossible for an atheist to live a **happy** and **fulfilling** life that is **simultaneously consistent** with their **belief system**. If an atheist lives a life that is consistent with their beliefs, they will not be happy. If they live happily, it is only because they are not living consistent with their belief system. As a result, **new age atheism is a failed belief system**.

Without God, Life Has No Objective Meaning

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20 (ESV) ¹⁹ *For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity.* ²⁰ *All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.*

If God does not exist, then both man and the universe are inevitably doomed to death. Man, like all biological organisms, must die. With no hope of immortality, our lives lead only to the grave. With no God, your life is just a spark in infinite blackness. A spark that appears, flickers, and dies forever.

If every last one of us are doomed to pass out of existence, what true **meaning** can really be applied to our lives? Does it really matter in the end if we existed at all? All the dreams we had, the struggles we overcame, the achievements we realized, all have no ultimate lasting significance. Without God, this is the horror of modern man. Because he ends in nothing, he is nothing.

Terms You Should Know

Objective Truth – Something that is true independent of anyone’s opinion about it. “Water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit”, is an objective fact.

Subjective Truth – Something that reflects a personal matter of opinion. “Chocolate tastes better than vanilla”, is a subjective opinion.

However, immortality alone would not ascribe meaning to our lives. Even if man and the universe existed forever, without God, our existence would still have no ultimate **meaning**.

Without God, Life Has No Objective Value

When we think of human traits that are good, we think of things like love, mercy, generosity, self-sacrifice. In contrast to this, when we think of human traits that are evil, we think of things like hate, ruthlessness, greed and exploitation.

Ecclesiastes 9: 2-3 (ESV) ² *It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath.* ³ *This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all...*

If your life ends at the grave, does it really make any difference whether you live your life as Mother Theresa or Adolf Hitler? Since your destiny is unrelated to the way you live your life, you might as well live it however you please!

Even worse, if there is no God, there stands no **objective** standard of right or wrong. In a world without God, who's to say whose values are objectively right or wrong? There can be no right or wrong. Only our personally relative, **subjective** judgments.

Consequences of No Objective Morals or Standard of Good and Evil

Moral Relativism - may be any of several philosophical positions concerned with the differences in moral judgments across different people and cultures. **Descriptive moral relativism** holds only that some people do in fact disagree about what is moral. **Meta-ethical moral relativism** holds that in such disagreements, nobody is objectively right or wrong; and **Normative moral relativism** holds that because nobody is right or wrong, we ought to tolerate the behavior of others even when we disagree about the morality of it.

Moral Conventionalism - a philosophical attitude that fundamental principles of a certain kind are grounded on (*explicit or implicit*) agreements in society, rather than on external reality.

Only God Can Serve as an Objective Standard of Good

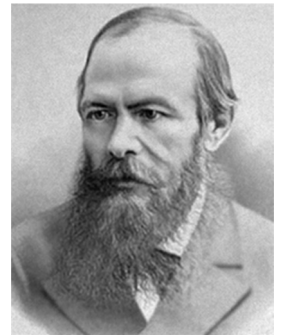
Psalms 119:68 (ESV) ⁶⁸ *You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.*

Mark 10:17-18 (ESV) ¹⁷ *And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* ¹⁸ *And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.*

Without God, Life Has No Objective Purpose

Ecclesiastes 2: 11 (ESV) ¹¹ *Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.*

Ecclesiastes 1: 11 (ESV) ¹¹ *There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.*



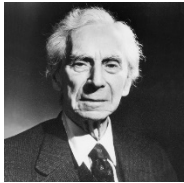
"If there is no immortality...then all things are permitted."

-Fyodor Dostoyevsky
(Russian novelist and philosopher)

If the annihilation of death waits for us all at the end of life's path, then what is the purpose of our existence on this earth? Is it all really for nothing? Is there no reason for life? What about for the universe we exist in? Is it ultimately pointless as well? Scientists say that it too will ultimately fade into oblivion eons into the future. Dying a heat death with no stars, no planets, no galaxies, nothing left behind. If this is true, then yes, it all must be completely pointless and purposeless.

Atheism Prevents One from Living a Happy, Fulfilling Life Consistent with Its Belief System

For a life to be personally fulfilling, it must possess *meaning, value and purpose*. We've effectively shown that atheism, followed to its end conclusion, prevents us from achieving any of the three. As a result, atheists are forced to confront the grim reality of choosing between living a life of despair, consistent with their beliefs. Or, as one prominent atheist proclaimed, manufacturing some "Noble Lie" that we and the universe have meaning in order to achieve artificial happiness.



In a letter written to the editor of 'The Observer' in October of 1957, **Bertrand Russell**, British philosopher and mathematician, admitted that although an outspoken atheist, he could not live as though ethical values were simply a matter of personal taste. Therefore, he found his own views "incredible". "I do not know the solution", he was quoted as saying.



French atheist, existentialist philosopher **Jean Paul Sartre**, taking Nietzsche's proclamation of God's death as a given, denied that there are any objective values or meaning to life to be discovered. Rather he stated that he believed each person is free to invent for himself whatever values and purposes he chooses. Oddly though, he struggled to reconcile this apparent libertinism with his opposition to Nazi anti-Semitism.



Richard Dawkins says that there is no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference. Yet, he is an unabashed moralist. He vigorously condemns such actions as the harassment and abuse of homosexuals, religious indoctrination of children and prizing cultural diversity over the interests of Amish children. He even goes so far as to offer his own amended Ten Commandments for guiding moral behavior, all the while marvelously oblivious to the contradiction with his ethical subjectivism.



French atheist, existentialist and novelist, **Albert Camus**, stated that "Since there is no God, we must regard life as absurd. Life is not merely meaningless, but twisted and cruel. Suicide is the only serious philosophical question." Despite his view that life was absurd, Camus argued against suicide and for promoting human brotherhood.

This is the journey's end of atheism. A state of existence so horrible, so inconceivable, that no man or woman, fully aware of its implications, can lightly accept it.

Furthermore, if one does identify as an atheist, they cannot live a happy, meaningful life unless they construct artificial meaning to their life. In doing so, they forfeit all authenticity of their belief system and become hypocrites of the highest order.

In our next lesson (Part 3), we will discuss the cosmological argument for God's existence. We will explore an ancient philosophical argument for the existence of God that has never been successfully refuted and has been found to be supported by recent scientific discoveries.

Questions for discussion:

1. As a believer in God, have you ever asked yourself why you believe in his existence? Is your belief rooted primarily in following religious customs of family and friends? Is it the result of a personal search for answers to life's basic questions? Or, is it a combination of these and other factors? Discuss.
2. Discuss the potential consequences of a Godless existence, both the reasons covered in our presentation and any others that might have occurred to you.
3. What are the benefits of knowing that your life has meaning? How does it affect your attitude toward other people?
4. What signs of cultural deterioration do you see as a result of denial of God's existence?
5. Imagine a world where everyone believes that moral values and duties aren't real but are just subjective illusions. How would it affect: Our legal and judicial systems? Countries involved in warfare? Our social relationships? World business and commerce?