

IN GOOD FAITH: BASIC CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Angry Unbelief

THEME: There is nothing new about “unbelief” – ranging from atheism to the denial of the deity of Jesus of Nazareth to the rejection of Holy Scripture as a true revelation from God. But the last 10 to 15 years have witnessed the emergence of what has been called “the new atheism” of persons such as Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Richard Dawkins. What is “new” about their unbelief is not their arguments but their strident anger. Why the anger? Why the bitter language? Why the open hostility? More important still, how should Christians respond to the angry unbelief of recent times?

ICE BREAKER

1. As your small group gathers this week, begin this way: Let each person name one thing from the past week for which he or she is grateful.
2. Follow each of these blessing reports by having the entire group say together in unison: “Thank you, God, for loving us and blessing us.”
3. While it is always appropriate to make our requests known to God, it is also appropriate (and sometimes overlooked!) to acknowledge all the good gifts we receive from him.
4. Now you are ready to begin your study time – after reading Psalm 100 aloud and singing a verse of “Count Your Many Blessings.”

THINK

1. Can you name a time and place where “angry” unbelief showed itself in your presence? In statements someone made directly to you?
2. Are there celebrities (e.g., Bill Maher), scientists (e.g., Stephen Hawking), or entertainers (e.g., Elton John) whose rants against Christianity you have heard or read? Do you remember the gist of them?
3. Are you able to put any of these angry statements in context? Can you account for the anger by the context?
4. How do you think Christians should respond to statements like these? Do you think they are ever made just to provoke believers? Does an equally angry response help or harm the case for faith?

EXAMINE

Read [Psalm 19:1-14](#) to answer the following questions:

1. This psalm praises God for the glory of his created works. How is creation itself an evidence of God’s existence and nature?
2. The *Argument from Design* (sometimes called the Teleological Argument) is a classic argument for God’s existence. State it in your own words.
3. Why has the Argument from Design become even more interesting in the past few decades? How has science become a great ally to faith?

4. What do you think is behind the popular misconception that science and faith are opposed to each other? How is that notion being challenged?
5. Discuss the following quote from C.S. Lewis: *"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."* What do you understand him to be saying? Do you agree with him?

Read [Romans 1:18-32](#) as background for the following questions:

1. In this text, Paul links two things: (a) an intellectual turn away from God and (b) the moral decline of a culture. How did his time in history illustrate that thesis? Do you think we have seen something similar in our culture?
2. How does atheism or the rejection of the Bible as divine revelation lead to the abandonment of moral standards?
3. Name a few specific behaviors (or use ones Paul identified) that one views differently from the perspective of faith versus unbelief. Does this help you understand some of the things we are experiencing in our culture?
4. How do you think the moral demands of Christian faith generate anger among some people?
5. How do you see the behavior of certain Christians as a source of anger among unbelievers? What sort of responsibility does this put on those who confess Christ?

THIS WEEK: When you encounter someone who is angry with or hostile to Christianity, remember that they are most likely angry with some of the abuses or misrepresentations of faith. It will not be helpful to respond with your own anger. Pray for the person. And continue to demonstrate the gentle love of Christ to him or her in every way possible.