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### Should You NOT be a Christian? (Part I)

**1 Corinthians 3:20-21:** (NASB) <sup>20</sup>... *The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.* <sup>21</sup>*So then let no one boast in men...*

About two months ago, we received an email from a listener - a college student - who was troubled. He is a Christian and had watched a YouTube video entitled, "Why I am no longer a Christian," a 1 1/2-hour, step-by-step presentation of how another young man went from devoted Christian to atheist. It was a well-done, non-inflammatory treatise on why the author now believed Christianity to be just a story. The young man who emailed asked us if we could answer, to which we responded, yes, just give us time. Stay with us for Part I as we go through this very detailed reasoning!

 **Belief in God a "mega-belief," *Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com***

- *In the mind of any sophisticated believer, the concept of God is a mega-belief. It's a belief that's held together by many small beliefs, many small experiences that accumulate and form a larger belief. If at any one time one of these beliefs is attacked, a believer can still in their own mind rely on the strength of the other beliefs. It is only when a sufficient number of these beliefs that form the mega-belief are countered that a Christian will really start to question their faith.*

Mega-beliefs are common in many aspects of our lives. Here are some examples: The theory of evolution, global warming, application of human rights (Who gets them? How should they be applied?), political perspectives, medical treatments vs. all natural approaches.


All of these things have their basic tenants subject to wildly varied interpretation. Our lives are built on many mega-belief systems, so Christianity is not set apart from these things.

 **Graceful degradation defined, *Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com***

- *Graceful degradation is a concept in network theory where multiple nodes in a network can be knocked out, but the network as a whole can still stand up. For the purpose of continuing my story, I will label these nodes. This is a simplified model of the concept of God, but I think that it covers a sufficient number of different subjects to make my de-conversion convincing.*

The speaker showed a picture showing "graceful degradation" applied to Christianity:

Part I of our program will review two of these topics - Prayer and Morality.


 **Debunking prayer, prayer answers as likely as life odds, *Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com***

- *Often in my own life, I found that the likeliness of a prayer request coming true seemed to be directly proportional to the likeliness of it happening without me praying. To adjust for this, as I got older, I started to ask for things I was more likely to get. For example, instead of asking for God to make me a robot, give me superpowers or send me to the moon, I'd ask for God's help on homework, or how I'm doing with a certain emotion, help for a friend in difficult circumstances. These are all things that I realized were likely to happen anyway, but I thought asking God for help might tip the odds in my favor.*

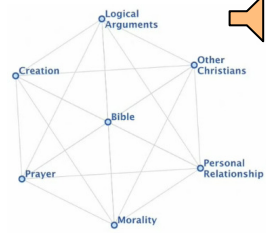
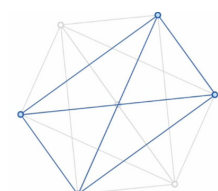
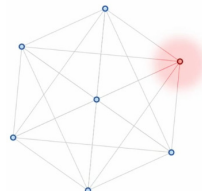
First, it seems as though we are to have the correct perspective about our God and about ourselves:

**Isaiah 57:15:** There is a greatness to the loftiness of God, and a smallness to the humility of man. But wait a minute - who says prayer is supposed to be about getting what I want??? **Romans 8:26-28:** This tells us that 1) sometimes we don't even know what we are supposed to be praying for, and 2) if you aren't getting what you want, it is to work together for your best spiritual interest. So is getting what I want proof of prayer or is not getting what I want proof of prayer, OR is all of that going to happen anyway so prayer is meaningless?

**Is there a way to "prove" that prayer works?** **1 Corinthians 3:1-3:** Although that set of Scriptures does not talk specifically on prayer, it does demonstrate an important scriptural principle: Spiritual maturity. If you are spiritually immature, you are like an infant, needing continual care and pampering. The Apostle Paul was telling the Corinthians that they needed to grow up. That principle is important to understand as we analyze prayer from a scriptural standpoint.

 **Debunking prayer, God's omniscience cancels intercessory prayers need, *Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com***

- *If God already knew everything before it happened and had set all the possible events in the universe in place, there is absolutely nothing I could ask for that He didn't already know about. Further, if He was omniscient, all benevolent, and had a plan for me, then why on earth was I trying to put myself in the driver's seat? What I really needed to be doing was trying to discover His will for my life. If God was omniscient, then He had already given me all the tools I*





*needed to solve whatever problem I had. It was my responsibility to find those tools and His will for how He wanted me to use them.*

We do not believe that God has every detail of our individual lives set out before us. It is not predestined for us to do everything like robots. We have a choice. God respects that and built that into humanity. That is why we are in a world of sin - He allows for the choices of humanity. The Scriptures are replete with examples of the choices we, as followers of God, can make to continually affirm and re-affirm our faith. We choose! **God uses our choice:** [Joshua 24:15](#): We all serve gods of some kind to whom we give our devotion, respect and service - even atheists and scientists. Although one can't scientifically prove the existence of God, one can't scientifically *disprove* God. It takes a step of faith one way or another. Where there are laws of nature, we see reason and design. **Once we choose, then we must apply ourselves to that decision:** [2 Timothy 2:15-16](#): We have to understand what we believe in. Christianity is not about just going to church on Sunday, nodding and listening. Can we *prove* that prayer works from a scientific standpoint? No. But what about the Arts? What is art? It adds beauty to the world, but one cannot quantify art in a scientific format. It stirs emotion and drive. Art moves people. Art and prayer are similar in that regard, as a moving force in humanity that changes people but is not quantifiable. A piece of art that we term as “priceless,” means it is cannot be quantified. Prayer is a moving part of our inner man but cannot be proved. So instead of proving it, we want to explain it.

 **Debunking prayer, study proves prayer doesn't work, [Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com](#)**

- *As an atheist, I later discovered an in-depth study on intercessory prayer involving 1,800 patients undergoing heart surgery. The study found no positive effect on the patients who had been prayed for. Even as an atheist, the results surprised me. Surprisingly, the study found that people who knew they were being prayed for actually had more complications after surgery than those who didn't.*

This is saying there was no positive effect from prayer because it did not physically heal the people. But remember, prayer is not about “what I get,” but “what I become.” We can say that prayer doesn't work, because there are many times we don't get what we pray for, and we think that what we pray for is “God Approved,” so there is no reason to not get it! Apparently even Jesus had the same “no” answer to his prayers: [Matthew 26:37-44](#): So if we put this three-prayer approach of Jesus in the same light as that scientific study, we would say that prayer had no positive effect on Jesus. He prayed three times and what was the result? Torture and death! **Just because we don't get what we ask for does not mean that asking was an exercise in futility. On the contrary, asking and being denied affirms in what direction we must go to get completely in line with God's will.** Prayer is not about getting stuff. Just because we don't get what we ask for doesn't mean prayer is not profitable.

**If prayer is not provable, then why not just pray to a jug of milk?**

 **Debunking prayer, yes-no-wait challenged, [Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com](#)**

- *It is often said that God answers prayers in the form of “yes, no and wait.” Sometimes the hardest answer to accept is “wait.” In their brilliant - if somewhat condescending - video, GII Video demonstrates using a clever example how this can be entirely psychological without God answering any prayers.*

**He is right - prayer CAN be entirely psychological!** [Matthew 7:7-11](#): With the psychological reality present, this text gets lots of Christians into trouble by misreading. For example, why would God deny me having a better car to use to drive people around? We need to be in line with the will of God and be content in whatever state we are in. Prayer is not about pursuing our own will. Who should we emulate? Someone thoroughly dedicated to and driven by the will of God. That's where we can find the true value of prayer, as opposed to just the masses of people. Frankly, most of us are way too immature in following the will of God.


 **Debunking prayer, praying to a jug of milk works, [Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com](#)**

- *To do this, they present the hypothetical in which instead of praying to God, you pray to a jug of milk. The jug of milk answers prayers in the form of Yes - No - Wait. Assume that you pray to the jug of milk to give you \$1,000.00, and they ask you to wait and see what happens. They present three different scenarios:*
- *1. Out of the blue you get a check for \$1,100 from the IRS, and they say, “See? The jug of milk answered your prayer!” 2. Several weeks later, out of the blue, you get a cost of living raise and that happens to increase your salary by \$1,200. And they say, “See? The jug of milk answered your prayer. You just had to wait!” 3. Nothing happens for six months, and if you ask them why, they would say, “We have to trust that the jug of milk knows best. Let's be patient.”*

There are problems with the “clever” analogy above: Our jug of milk, just like any other idol that man creates, does not give reasons for answers. It does not set guidelines. It does not provide inspiration and direction. It is not historical or prophetic. It is just a clever delusion to sow earthly doubt about something that is spiritually-based. Prayer works. It changes our lives in dramatic fashion. The greatest



answers to prayers have not been about “me,” but directions in life that further glorify God Himself. **James 4:3-4:** There is futility in asking for things to consume with our own pleasures and lusts. Prayer is not about selfishness. Often - even within Christianity - some teach that prayer is to have everything to make our lives grand and wonderful. The truth is, Jesus wants you to have everything in your life to make it *sacrificial*, if you are following after him. **Speaking of milk: Hebrews 5:12-14:** As mature Christians, we begin to realize that prayer is transforming for our lives. It is not about “getting,” it is about “changing,” and that is why it is not quantifiable. **The Apostle Paul’s reaction to being told “NO” to his request for help: 2 Corinthians 12:8-10:** How do you prove the validity of prayer? Certainly not by science or case study. Rather, seek those Christians whose lives are truly built around not only living the will of God, but actually put godliness above every other thing in their lives. Ask them about prayer and its transforming power and influence. What you will find is a life that is truly content, driven and secure - a life that lives and breathes prayer. Is that proof of the reality of the power of prayer? You decide!

 **Graceful degradation, morality introduction, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, youtube.com**

- *God is seen as the source of morality for Christians. Without God, there can be no morals.*

A few weeks ago, we talked about what God wants from us and based it on the two greatest Commandments: Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. A vast majority of cultures throughout all of history have adopted the second commandment, but it seems that the first was forgotten. The Torah (the first five books of the Bible) was the first known written record of these things, and it certainly gives us the sense that morality does come from God...so how does that impact our world? **First, we acknowledge God as the source: James 1:17** **Second, we acknowledge why God is the source: Isaiah 55:8-11:** Scientific theory says we are here by pure chance, by accident. Therefore, there is no intelligent design, so morality must be created.

 **Debunking Morality as from God, college ethics class expectations, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, youtube.com**

- *By the time I was 19 or 20, I felt I had morality pretty much figured out. That all changed when I took a required class in professional ethics as a college student. I thought ethics were extremely important, and I felt that this class would have a valuable influence on other people who took the class. I felt that most people my age didn’t have as strong of an ethical basis for the decisions and attitudes in their lives as I did. I hoped that in the process of taking the class, I could possibly set an example for the other people to follow if the opportunity arose.*

He was going into the environment to teach by example and not to learn.

**Third, we focus on emulating the ultimate source of morals: James 3:13-18:** There is a danger in avoiding the true source of all that is good, because it is easily corruptible. **Fourth, we attempt to comprehend the magnitude of the ultimate source of morals: Romans 11:33-36:** We use God’s standard to check our personal interpretation of morality and constantly improve it. We have a standard higher than ours. So, according to Scripture, it seems to be easy to locate the source of our morality. Now the question is, is having God as the source of our morality a good thing or are there flaws in that reasoning?

 **Debunking morality as from God, ethics defined and objectivity displayed, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, youtube.com**

- *Ethics isn’t about telling people how to be good, it’s about helping good people make good decisions when the best decision isn’t always clear. That statement completely changed my perspective of what the class was about. Something else that affected me was the way that our teacher presented positions that he ultimately ended up disagreeing with. When there were two sides to a dispute, you could never tell which one the teacher ultimately agreed with until the very end, when we all reasoned together to mutually reach what seemed to be the best conclusion.*

*“Ethics isn’t about telling people how to be good, it’s about helping good people make good decisions when the best decision isn’t always clear.”* We really like this statement and agree that we need some sort of guideline when the situation is foggy. **The Old Testament was very clear as to how to maintain a moral and ethical approach to life: Joshua 1:7:** What better way to “help people make good decisions” than to constantly direct them back to the laws of God, from which their highest moral and ethical standards were derived? **Micah 6:6-8:** As a Christian, we have a source for our ethics that is higher than us. Those who do not believe in God use themselves as the source.

 **Debunking morality as from God, Three assumptions and no clear proof of God, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, youtube.com**

- *I had always assumed that any intelligent, ethical and open-minded person believed in God. It was clear that my teacher was intelligent, ethical and open-minded, but it wasn’t clear whether or not he believed in God. Despite the fact that I couldn’t figure out my teacher’s personal*



*beliefs, God came up pretty early on in the semester. The teacher made it clear that he believed that no conclusive proof could be made either way for the existence of God.*

But just because someone isn't a Christian does not mean they do not have a sense of morality and ethics! The problem is the vast majority of people without God may not have that same ethical code. Non-Christians who are moral do not take away from Christianity or its principles. *See “The Universal Moral Code” in the Bonus Material at the end of the Full Edition Rewind.*

All of this being said, there is positive attention given to some non-believers in the Bible. **A great scriptural example of a moral person who was not Jewish or Christian: Luke 7:1-10:** Jewish elders pleaded with Jesus on behalf of this Gentile, saying he was worthy. He had an appreciation for Israel and put his own efforts into building the synagogue. He was kind and generous, but a Gentile.



**Observations:** He was a Roman Centurion who knew about Jesus. He was not Jewish and not a Christian; He had a strong relationship with local Jewish leaders and they recommended him to Jesus as worthy; Jesus could see a lifetime of efforts; Jesus fulfilled the request for healing - to a Gentile - even though Jesus came first for the Jews only; and The Centurion displayed great faith and humility - more than Israel had shown.



**Debunking morality as from God, The Euthyphro Dilemma, Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com**

- *Assuming God did exist, my teacher addressed God's relation to ethics in the form of the “Euthyphro Dilemma,” which is as follows: Is what is moral commanded by God because it is moral, or is it moral because it is commanded by God?*

Basically, is morality higher than God, or can God manipulate morality? **The core issue is with rule changing. Those who change the rules will ultimately fall: Matthew 12:24-28:** Jesus is explaining that if a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand. So if God, therefore, is changing the moral fabric of the way things work, His kingdom could not stand because it would not be firm. Something that contradicts itself could not stand the test of time. We don't want to emulate someone who is imperfect but instead want to look towards a higher standard.



**Debunking morality as from God, The Euthyphro Dilemma applied, Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com**

- *The teacher argued that the second possibility was absurd. For example, if things were just moral because God commanded them, then God could command anything and it would become moral. This is called “divine command theory.” The problem with this is that God could command murder and child molestation and these things would not only be “good,” but morally required. It would make the word “good” meaningless, because there would be no standard by which to judge what is good. There would be no ultimate values; it would just be whatever random things God declared were good, and this didn't align with the God that I knew.*

The argument is that obviously morality could not come from God, because God could change the rules of morality. Things that we see as immoral would have to become moral because God said so. We believe things are moral because God says they are. God commands them. But, we believe God is bound by the laws of morality that He has stated. He has bound himself by those laws and it is impossible for Him to change. The “what if” scenario applies only to the imperfect morality of men. **The Bible assures us of this in many places, such as: Hebrews 6:13-19:** God has an unchangeable, unwavering plan. He cannot and will not waiver from it. We have no worries when it comes to God and morality, as He is bound by the laws of justice, wisdom, love and mercy. In dealing with humanity, God has made promise after promise that He will not change those principles. The Greek gods were filled with emotion, pride, and ego, so this question was valid for Plato and Socrates to discuss. **James 1:12-18:** There is no shifting in God's plans and purposes for humankind. But could one say God treated humans differently in the Old Testament than in the New Testament? Did He change? The answer is no. He did not change, but the dispensation, the time changed. The part of the lesson for all of humanity changed. Take the example of a human father with children. When they are younger, they are taught certain things at a basic level. One does not teach a five-year old what one would teach a 15-year old. One does not debate with a 5-year old what one would debate with a 15-year old. One would treat them differently but in the context of the same end result. The God of the Old Testament provided a different kind of treatment for a different time of humanity. **James 3:13-17:** We don't want to put our faith in unstable humanity. We don't make God like man; we keep Him above us. Yes, morality comes from God and that is the most reliable source in the universe! Those who have “de-converted” have taken pieces and parts of the Gospel message and looked at them with doubts. When you take the whole message of the Scriptures, put it all together and reason through it, you find something solid and that gives us great confidence and great faith.

*Should you NOT be a Christian...?*

*For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...*

*Think about it...!*