







Evangelism Resource Guide
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Comparative Chart of Major Religions




From http://www.religionfacts.com/big_religion_chart.htm
According to this site, there are 2 billion Christians worldwide.

Religion/Sect/ Belief System	Origins & History	Adherents Worldwide (approx.)	God(s) and Universe	Human Situation and Life's Purpose	Afterlife	Practices	Texts
Atheism	Appears throughout history (including ancient Greek philosophy), but especially after the Enlightenment (19th cent).	1.1 billion (this figure includes agnostic and non-religious, which tend to be grouped on surveys)	There is no God or divine being. Beliefs about the universe usually based on latest scientific findings.	Since there is no afterlife, this one life is of great importance. Only humans can help themselves and each other solve the world's problems.	none	none	Influential works include those by Marx, Freud, Feuerbach, and Voltaire. Notable modern authors include Richard Dawkins and Carl Sagan.
<u>Wicca</u> 	Based on ancient pagan beliefs, but modern form founded early 1900s. Founder generally said to be Gerald Gardner.	1-3 million	Polytheism, centered on the Goddess and God, each in various forms; also a belief in a Supreme Being over all	"If it harms none, do what you will."	Reincarnation until reach the Summerland	Prayer, casting a circle, Drawing Down the Moon, reciting spells, dancing, singing, sharing cakes and wine or beer	No sacred text; foundational texts include <i>The Witch Cult in Western Europe</i> and <i>The God of the Witches</i>

<p><u>Buddhism</u></p> 	<p>Founded by Siddharta Gautama (the Buddha) in c. 520 BC, NE India.</p>	<p>360 million</p>	<p>Varies: Theravada atheistic; Mahayana more polytheistic. Buddha taught nothing is permanent.</p>	<p>Purpose is to avoid suffering and gain enlightenment and release from cycle of rebirth, or at least attain a better rebirth by gaining merit.</p>	<p>Reincarnation (understood differently than in Hinduism, with no surviving soul) until gain enlightenment</p>	<p>Meditation, mantras, devotion to deities (in some sects), mandalas (Tibetan)</p>	<p>Tripitaka (Pali Canon); Mahayana sutras like the Lotus Sutra; others.</p>
<p><u>Confucianism</u></p> 	<p>Founded by Confucius (551–479 BC), China</p>	<p>5-6 million</p>	<p>Not addressed</p>	<p>Purpose of life is to fulfill one's role in society with propriety, honor, and loyalty.</p>	<p>Not addressed</p>	<p>Honesty, politeness, propriety, humaneness, perform correct role in society, loyalty to family, nation</p>	<p><i>Analects</i></p>
<p><u>Hinduism</u></p>	<p>Indigenous religion of India as developed to present day.</p>	<p>900 million</p>	<p>One Supreme Reality (Brahman) manifested in many gods and goddesses</p>	<p>Humans are in bondage to ignorance and illusion, but are able to escape. Purpose is to gain release from rebirth, or at least a better rebirth.</p>	<p>Reincarnation until gain enlightenment.</p>	<p>Yoga, meditation, worship (puja),</p>  <p>devotion to a god or goddess, pilgrimage to holy cities, live according to one's dharma (purpose/ role).</p>	<p><i>The Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, etc.</i></p>

<p><u>Islam</u></p> 	<p>Muhammad, 622 AD, Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>1.3 billion (Sunni: 940 million)</p>	<p>One God (Allah in Arabic)</p>	<p>Humans must submit (<i>islam</i>) to the will of God to gain Paradise after death.</p>	<p>Paradise or Hell.</p>	<p>Five Pillars: Faith, Prayer, Alms, Pilgrimage, Fasting. Mosque services on Fridays. Ablutions before prayer. No alcohol or pork. Holidays related to the pilgrimage and fast of Ramadan.</p>	<p><i>Qur'an</i> (Scripture); <i>Hadith</i> (tradition)</p>
<p>Nation of Islam</p> 	<p>Wallace Fard Muhammad, 1930, Detroit, USA</p> <p>« <i>The letters stand for "Justice, Equality, Freedom, Islam"</i></p>	<p>Estimates range from 10,000 to 100,000</p>	<p>"One God whose proper name is Allah." Wallace Fard Muhammad became the divine messiah and incarnation of Allah in 1930. The Earth is over 76 trillion years old and all land was once called "Asia."</p>	<p>"The Blackman is the original man" (<i>Message to the Blackman</i>). Live righteously and worship Allah.</p>	<p>Mental resurrection of the righteous. Black people will be mentally resurrected first.</p>	<p>Prayer five times a day. Work for the equality of the African race. Respect laws of the land, don't carry arms, don't make war. Healthy living and abstinence from alcohol, smoking and substance abuse. Modest dress.</p>	<p>Qur'an and "Scriptures of all the Prophets of God" are holy texts. Influential writings include Elijah Muhammad's <i>Message to the Blackman in America</i> (1965)</p>

<p><u>Sikhism</u></p> 	<p>Guru Nanak, c. 1500 AD, Punjab, India.</p>	<p>23 million</p>	<p>One God (Ik Onkar, Nam)</p>	<p>Overcome the self, align life with will of God, and become a "saint soldier," fighting for good.</p>	<p>Reincarnation until resolve karma and merge with God.</p>	<p>Prayer and meditation on God's name, services at temple (gurdwara), turban and five Ks. Balance work, worship, and charity. No monasticism or asceticism.</p>	<p><i>Adi Granth (Sri Guru Granth Sahib)</i></p>
<p><u>Jehovah's Witnesses</u></p> 	<p>Charles Taze Russell, 1879, Pittsburgh</p>	<p>6.5 million</p>	<p>One God, Jehovah. No Trinity - Christ is the first creation of God; the Holy Spirit is a force.</p>	<p>Salvation is through faith in Christ and obeying Jehovah's laws. The End of the World is soon.</p>	<p>Heaven for 144,000 chosen Witnesses, eternity on new earth for other Witnesses. All others annihilated. No hell.</p>	<p>No blood transfusions, no celebration of holidays, no use of crosses or religious images. Baptism, Sunday service at Kingdom Hall, strong emphasis on evangelism.</p>	<p><i>New World Translation of the Scriptures</i></p>
<p><u>Mormonism (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)</u></p>	<p>Joseph Smith, 1830, New York, USA</p>	<p>12.2 million</p>	<p>God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three separate individual beings</p>	<p>Humans existed as spirits before this life, salvation is returning to God. Salvation by faith in Christ, good works,</p>	<p>All return to spirit world for period of instruction before resurrection. Mormons to heaven with God and</p>	<p>Abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, coffee and tea; baptism for the dead; eternal marriage; temple garments under</p>	<p>Christian Bible, <i>Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price</i></p>

				ordinances, and evangelism.	families; others rewarded but not with God; hell for those who reject God after death.	daily clothes; active evangelism.	
<u>Seventh-day Adventists</u> 	Rooted in Millerite movement; founded 1863 in New England; early leaders: Ellen White, Hiram Edson and Joseph Bates	10 million	One God who is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	Second Coming of Christ is imminent; salvation is by faith in Christ; emphasis on quality of life both now and in afterlife	A "peaceful pause" after death until the coming of Christ, then resurrection to judgment, followed by eternity in heaven or nonexistence. No hell.	Sabbath observance on Saturdays; healthful lifestyle; baptism by immersion	Christian Bible; later prophets like Ellen White are inspired and authoritative when tested against Scriptures
<u>Judaism</u> 	The religion of the Hebrews (c. 1300 BC), especially after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD.	14 million	One God, Yahweh (YHVH).	Obey God's commandments, live ethically. Focus is more on this life than the next.	Not historically emphasized. Beliefs vary from no afterlife to shadowy existence to the World to Come (similar to heaven).	Circumcision at birth, bar/bat mitzvah at adulthood. Synagogue services on Saturdays. No pork or other non-kosher foods. Holidays related to historical events.	Bible (Tanakh), Talmud

Islam and Nation of Islam					
Adherents (approx.)	God(s) and Universe	Human Situation and Life's Purpose	Afterlife	Practices	Texts
Islam: Founded by Muhammad in 622 AD, Saudi Arabia (Origin and History) Islam means submission to God.					
1.3 billion (Sunni: 940 million)	One God (Allah in Arabic)	Humans must submit to the will of Allah to gain Paradise after death.	Paradise or Hell	<p>Five Pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faith, 2. Prayer 3. Alms 4. Pilgrimage 5. Fasting <p>Seven Beliefs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allah 2. Angels (both good and bad 3. The revealed Books of God 4. God's many prophets" (including Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, and other Christians and Jews are familiar with) 5. Last Day 6. Divine measurement of human affairs 7. Life after death <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mosque services on Fridays • Ablutions before prayer • No alcohol or pork • Holidays related to the pilgrimage and fast of Ramadan. 	<i>Qur'an</i> (Scripture dictated by God through the angel Gabriel); <i>Hadith</i> (tradition)
Adherents (approx.)	God(s) and Universe	Human Situation and Life's Purpose	Afterlife	Practices	Texts

Nation of Islam: Wallace Fard Muhammad became the divine messiah and incarnation of Allah in 1930. Detroit, USA (**Origin and History**)

<p>Estimates range from 10,000 to 100,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "One God whose proper name is Allah" • The Earth is over 76 trillion years old • All land was once called "Asia" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The Blackman is the original man" (<i>Message to the Blackman</i>) • Live righteously and worship Allah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental resurrection of the righteous • Black people will be mentally resurrected first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer 5 times a day • Work for equality of African race • Respect laws of land, don't carry arms, don't make war • Healthy living, abstinence from alcohol, smoking and substance abuse • Modest dress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qur'an and "Scriptures of all the Prophets of God" are holy texts • Influential writings include Elijah Muhammad's <i>Message to the Blackman in America</i> (1965)
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Some Tips on Witnessing to Muslims:

- Be courteous and loving.
- Reflect interest in their beliefs. Allow them time to articulate their views.
- Be acquainted with their basic beliefs.
- Be willing to examine passages of the Qur'an concerning their beliefs.
- Stick to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith but also take time to respond to all sincere questions.
- Point out the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ for salvation.
- Stress that because of Jesus, His cross, and His resurrection one may have the full assurance of salvation, both now and for eternity.
- Share the plan of salvation. People do not have to earn salvation.
- Pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Trust Him to provide wisdom and grace.
- Be willing to become a friend and personal evangelist to Muslims.

Roberts, P. 1996) *North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist*. Retrieved from <http://www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/beliefs/islam.html>

Basic Dos and Don'ts

- Women should dress modestly around Muslims. (This is actually a biblical concept too, but Muslims take it more seriously than we do.)
- Women should not offer to shake the hand of a Muslim man. If he offers his hand, then it's okay.
- Never assume you know what a Muslim believes. Always ask the person.
- Feel free to read the Qur'an.
- Avoid the politics of Israel if possible. Muslims see this as a hot button issue. Focus on Jesus. You can never "win" this argument.
- Be aware Muslims consider pork, alcohol, and dogs as "dirty" in Islam.
- Avoid showing the bottom of your feet.
- Never use your left hand to shake or eat.
- Express sadness at the state of Western morals and spirituality. Make a clear distinction between the "Christian West" and what a true follower of Jesus looks like.
- Always offer to pray for your Muslim friend. Muslims have a great deal of respect for prayer and people of prayer. Pray for blessing on their family, work, and home. Invite God's Spirit to come and touch them. Pray loud right then.
- Share from personal experience. Tell stories. Be real.
- Talk about your family and ask about theirs. They view family as central to their personal community.
- Above all—listen. Be a good listener. You will win the heart of anyone when you listen!

Medearis, C. (2008). *Muslims, Christians, and Jesus: Gaining understanding and building relationships*. Bethany House. Used by permission.

Questions and Answers about Islam

1. Is it true Islam resembles Christianity?

Although the two religions share some terminology and even some theology (monotheism, for instance), Islam differs from Christianity. Islam bases itself on works, while Christian faith stands on salvation by grace through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Christianity recognizes the necessity of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin ([Heb 9:22](#)). Muslims believe in Satan and a Day of Judgment of which Allah will send people to either heaven or hell. They also believe Ishmael (the father of the Arab world), not Isaac, received the promise from God through Abraham. This helps explain why Arab Muslims see their claim to the Holy Land as a God-given right.

2. What do Muslims believe about Jesus?

Muslims see Jesus as a great prophet, born of a virgin--yet only a man. They believe God sent Jesus to help people obey God. Islam claims Jesus spoke as a baby, healed the sick, and raised the dead. The Quran refers to Jesus as the breath of God, spirit of God, life of God, and word of God. Muslims do not believe Jesus died on the cross; rather, God took Him up to heaven right before His

crucifixion and someone else (probably Judas) replaced Him on the cross. Muslims do believe in the second coming of Christ! Jesus will return to the earth to usher in the final judgment from God and confirm Islam as the true and final religion for all humankind.

3. How do Muslims view their salvation?

As a works-oriented religion, Islam requires its adherents earn their way to heaven by performing the five pillars of the faith.

- **Say the confession of faith.** A Muslim must confess, "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the prophet of God."
- **Pray.** Muslims must pray five times a day: shortly before sunrise, mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, and after sunset.
- **Give alms.** Muslims must give about 2.5% of their wealth.
- **Fast during Ramadan.** For one lunar month, from sunrise to sunset, Muslims cannot pass anything down their throat. (Theoretically, a good Muslim spits out his or her saliva.) Then from sunset to sunrise, they eat as little or as much as they want. In this manner, they develop discipline and relate to the poor. (Travelers, young children and pregnant or nursing mothers do not need to keep the fast.)
- **Pilgrimage to Mecca.** Every financially able Muslim should travel to the birthplace of Islam once in a lifetime.

4. Do Muslims know their guarantee of salvation?

Muslims have no guarantee of salvation. They believe Allah will account for all their works on Judgment Day. If a person's bad works outweigh their good works, one goes to go to hell. However, if good works outweigh bad, the person probably goes to heaven. Since they see Allah as all-powerful, they concede he may do with you as he pleases, even if a person has been righteous. They hope He will not have a "bad day" at Judgment. On the other hand, a Muslim may also go to hell to burn off sin for a while, and then go to heaven. The only guarantee for a Muslims to go to heaven comes through "jihad" literally meaning, "to exert force for God." One could be in "jihad" by writing a book about Islam, sharing his faith to bring others to Islam, or physically fighting for the cause of Islam. If a Muslim dies in "jihad," that person has a guarantee to go to heaven.

5. Do Muslims understand Christianity? How do they view Christianity?

The average Muslim has a tremendous misunderstanding of Christianity from movies, music and television. Muslims think Christians believe in three gods: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Mother (Mary). They believe Christians and Jews have changed the Bible with different versions. Although the Quran acknowledges the Gospel of Christ, the Torah of Moses and the Psalms of David, they cannot trust the existing copies. In any case, the Quran supersedes them. Because of pornography from the West and its media, they equate Christianity with sex, drugs, alcohol, rape, and divorce--All the evils of the West. This misconception confirms their belief of Islam as the true and final religion for all humankind.

6. What happens if Muslims come to know Christ?

Culturally, Muslims fit into a larger group of people to feel secure by belonging to an extended family, a network of friends, etc. In this community, they experience security and safety. They may worry about leaving their current community when confronted with the truth about Jesus' message of redemption. Muslims may need to find a new community of Christians before they will leave their community of Muslims.

Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah's Witnesses

I was raised as a Jehovah's Witness and remained one until age 11. Coming out of this cult, I entered my teenage years as a bitter atheist where I remained until I graduated from college. Through God's amazing grace I was saved in 1994 after reading the Bible and realizing that it was indeed the true Word of God.

Repeatedly God has blessed me with the passion and privilege to witness to the Jehovah's Witnesses. You've almost certainly had them come knocking on your door on a Saturday afternoon and you may have even engaged a Jehovah's Witness in a theological discussion. In talking to other Christians I find that when presented with a face-to-face encounter with a Jehovah's Witness there are usually two responses:

- A “frontal assault” via debate or heated discussion; or
- A polite "no thanks, I'm already a Christian" followed by an all too abrupt closing of the door.

For the mature Christian, what's usually missing is the realization that this is a true witnessing opportunity--one that has arrived right at your doorstep.

In my earliest attempts at grabbing the proverbial bull by the horns, I tried engaging them in direct debates, often quoting from several texts I had studied regarding the cultic practices of the Jehovah's Witnesses. After several failed “conversion” attempts, often ending with thoroughly frustrated Jehovah's Witnesses unwilling to ever return to my residence, I arrived at a startling realization: Jehovah's Witnesses are real people, with real needs and real feelings. They can feel frustration, anger, fear, and confusion. I then realized that the reason my frontal assaults on the Jehovah's Witnesses never seemed to work was because I had not put myself in their place and taken their feelings into account.

A wise man once said, "When you want to get someone's attention, you don't shine a flashlight in their eyes." In presenting my arguments and facts without giving them time to prepare, I had forgotten that they were human beings searching for the truth. I had not been speaking this truth in love.

Months later, when I was again presented with an opportunity to speak with Jehovah's Witnesses at my door, I engaged them in conversation, and agreed to do a weekly Bible study with them in order to further discuss what exactly they believed. They agreed, with the understanding that along the way I would ask questions whenever we arrived at a topic or subject with which I disagreed or failed to understand. The amazing difference was that instead of blindsiding them with questions and points of contention, I was giving them an opportunity to prepare themselves for a topic of discussion.

More importantly, though, I began to care about them personally and yearn for their salvation. In this way, I am able to meet with Witnesses on a weekly basis and take them off the streets, focusing on critical topics such as the requirement that one be born again to enter the kingdom of God, the unbiblical theology of a two-class system of believers, and the true identity of Jesus Christ.

Author: Clint DeBoer. Excerpted from *The Evidence Bible* by Ray Comfort

Encounters between Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses typically revolve around a discussion of deity. The reason for this is twofold. First, this is the area where Watchtower theology deviates most dramatically from orthodox Christianity. In contrast to the Trinitarian concept of one God in three Persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--the JW's have been taught to believe that God the Father alone is "Jehovah," the only true God; that Jesus Christ is Michael the archangel, the first angelic being created by God; and that the Holy Spirit is neither God nor a person, but rather God's impersonal "active force." Second, the subject of deity is a frequent confrontational focus because both Jehovah's Witnesses and Christians (at least those who like to witness to JW's) feel confident and well-prepared to defend their stand and attack the opposing viewpoint.

Due to the profound theological differences, such discussions often take the form of spiritual trench warfare--a long series of arguments and counterarguments, getting nowhere and ending in mutual frustration. But this need not be the case, especially if the Christian will "become all things to all men" by taking a moment to put himself in the Witness shoes, so to speak (see 1 Cor 9:22). In the JW's mind he himself is a worshiper of the true God of the Bible, while you are a lost soul who has been misled by the devil into worshipping a pagan three-headed deity.

Since the Watchtower Society speaks of "Jesus Christ, whom we understand from the Scriptures to be Michael the archangel" (*The Watchtower*, February 15, 1979, p. 31), put the JW on the spot and ask him to show you "the Scriptures" that say Jesus is Michael. There are none. The Watchtower Society New World Translation (NWT) mentions Michael five times as: 1) "one of the foremost princes" (Dan. 10:13); 2) "the prince of [Daniel's] people" (Dan. 10:21); 3) "the great prince who is standing in behalf of the sons of [Daniel's] people" (Dan. 12:1); 4) "the archangel" who "had a difference with the devil and was disputing about Moses body" but "did not dare to bring a judgment against him in abusive terms" (Jude 9); and 5) a participant in heavenly conflict when "Michael and his angels battled with the dragon" (Rev. 12:7).

Ask the Jehovah's Witness which one of these verses says that Michael is Jesus Christ. Help him to see that it is necessary to read Scripture plus a complicated Watchtower argument to reach that conclusion. Rather than being merely "one of the foremost princes," Jesus Christ is "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14, NWT) and is "far above every government and authority and

power and lordship and every name named, not only in this system of things, but also in that to come" (Ephesians 1:21, NWT). And, unlike "Michael who did not dare condemn the Devil with insulting words, but said, The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9, Today's English Version), Jesus Christ displayed His authority over the devil when He freely commanded him, "Go away, Satan!" (Matthew 4:10, NWT).

In arguing that Jesus is Michael the archangel, the Watchtower Society also points to another verse that does not use the name Michael but says that "the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangels voice and with God's trumpet..." (1 Thess 4:16, NWT).

However, the expression "with an archangels voice" simply means that the archangel, like God's trumpet, will herald the coming of the Lord, not that the Lord is an archangel. Point out to the JW that none of the verses he has attempted to use as proof-texts even comes close to stating that Jesus Christ is Michael the archangel. In fact, Scripture clearly teaches the opposite: namely, that the Son of God is superior to the angels. The entire first chapter of Hebrews is devoted to this theme. Have the Witness read Hebrews chapter one aloud with you, and, as you do so, interrupt to point out the sharp contrast between angels and the Son of God. "For to what angel did God ever say, Thou are my Son...? And again, when he brings the first-born into the world, he says, Let all Gods angels worship him" (vv. 5,6, RSV).

Remind the JW that angels consistently refuse worship ("Be careful! Do not do that! ...Worship God," Revelation 22:8,9, NWT), but the Fathers command concerning the Son is, "Let all Gods angels worship him" (Hebrews 1:6). That is how the Watchtowers own New World Translation read for some 20 years until, in 1970, the Society changed it to read "do obeisance to him" instead of "worship him"--part of their consistent campaign to eliminate from their Bible all references to the deity of Christ. (See John 10:36 comment.)

Author: David A. Reed, Ex-Jehovah's Witness elder. Excerpted from *The Evidence Bible* by Ray Comfort

From: <http://www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/beliefs/jehovahswitness.html>

How to Witness to an Atheist

It was early in the morning, late in 2004. Very early. Most people in the airport looked as though they could have done with an extra week or so in bed. I was flying back from New York to Los Angeles waiting to board a plane when a tall man asked me, "What rows did they call?" I answered, "First class... the rich folks." He smiled and said, "Yeah. The ones who should be going on their own Learjet." I handed him a Million Dollar Bill tract and said, "Here's the down payment on your Learjet." When he smiled, I passed him a Department of Annoyance tract, and said, "And here's my card." He turned it over and to my horror began to read out loud the gospel message on the back--despite the fact that the text was printed in reverse to give me getaway time. When I quickly added, "It's a gospel tract," he mumbled "I'm an atheist."

While atheism is the ultimate intellectual suicide, I can understand why some people are tempted to believe that there's no God. The previous night I had listened to a CNN report that scientists had discovered why human beings are more intelligent than animals. I was intrigued with their assumption, and listened to how scientists believed that 20 million years ago we developed larger brains. They predicted that the human brain will continue to grow, giving us larger heads. This will mean that future generations will see more Cesarean births. I admired the newscaster's ability to remain straight-faced.

A few minutes later, CNN reported that after a giant tsunami in Southeast Asia killed multitudes, authorities could hardly find any animals that died in the flooding. They surmised that the animals had some sort of intelligence that caused them to move to higher ground when the tsunami-causing earthquake struck. It was human beings who stayed on the beach to take pictures of the wave as it approached.

As I stood in line at the airport, the morning newspaper showed a picture of a ten-year-old piece of grilled cheese sandwich which was said to bear the likeness of the Virgin Mary. It was sold on eBay to an "intelligent" human, who paid \$28,000 for it.

It is information like this that should help anyone with any intelligence to realize that humanity isn't as intelligent as we are led to believe. While most Christians are too smart to bite into the error of Virgin Mary toast, they profess a faith that makes no sense. While watching TV in my hotel room the night before, I saw a well-known pastor talk about his book, which has sold a phenomenal 20 million copies. He said that God's agenda for humanity was to "make our lives better." That was a summation of his message.

Tell that to those who were burying tens of thousands of human corpses after the tsunami hit. Tell that to the fathers who hold the dead bodies of their beloved children in their arms, or to the relatives of those who died of horrific diseases. It doesn't take much intelligence to realize that if there is a God who created all things, He must be all-powerful. Nothing is impossible for Him. He therefore could have easily prevented unspeakable agony by simply lifting His finger off the earthquake button. But He didn't.

Yes, there is plenty of evidence (from cheese sandwiches to tsunamis) for a thinking person to conclude that a God of love who is all-powerful and wants to better the life of humanity doesn't exist. If He did, He would immediately get a supply of good food to the starving in Africa so that their lives may be better, or at least provide some rain to grow their crops.

During that same day the tsunami hit, 150,000 other people died around the world--about 40,000 of starvation. If He wanted to make our lives better, perhaps He could also halt the parade of killer hurricanes that line up to regularly devastate the U.S., or He could slow down the hundreds of terrifying tornadoes that take precious human lives each year. Maybe He could even whisper to us a cure for the cancers that are killing millions annually, including innocent children.

A quick look at Jer 9:21-24 gives the answer to this intellectual dilemma. How could God be loving and yet allow suffering? The Bible tells us that He is in control, and that He does send judgments to this earth. God is love, but He's also just and holy and if He gave us what we deserve, the tsunami of His holiness would sweep us all into Hell.

Imagine you have knowledge that a bridge has been washed out by a terrible storm, on a dark and moonless night. You stop all approaching cars and say, "The bridge that spans a thousand-foot chasm has been washed away! Please turn your vehicle around." The violence of the storm itself is enough to convince any thinking driver that you are speaking the truth, and those who have the sense to believe you do turn around.

Tsunamis, terrible diseases, agonizing cancers, massive earthquakes, devastating tornados, killer hurricanes, awful suffering, and death itself are very real and violent storms that should be enough to convince any thinking person that our warning is true.

The message of Christianity isn't one of God wanting to better this life for humanity. It is one of warning of a terrible fate in store for those who continue on the road of sin. We are told by God's Word that there are two deaths on the highway to Hell. The first death is when we leave the storms of this life and pass into timeless eternity. The second death is the chasm of eternal damnation. It is the terrifying justice of a holy God.

So with the cheese sandwich insanity, and the confusion about the message of Christianity, I could sympathize with my atheist friend in the airport. When he professed atheism it gave me the opportunity to humbly cite my atheist credentials. I said, "I wrote a book called *God Doesn't Believe in Atheists: Proof the Atheist Doesn't Exist*." Then I told him that I was a platform speaker at the American Atheists' national convention in 2001. I offered, "It's really easy to prove God's existence." He replied, "It's not healthy for me to talk about God." I said that I could understand that, and added, "But you are a reasonable and open-minded person, so you can listen to me for two minutes."

He gave me the okay, so I told him how he could know for sure that God existed, that God had given him a conscience and that if he even lusted after a woman, Jesus said that he had committed adultery already with her in his heart. I also mentioned that if a criminal was given a death sentence and he said to the judge, "But I don't believe in the electric chair," it didn't change reality.

He politely listened, and said, "Well, I'd better board the plane." He reached out his hand, shook mine and said, "My name is Pat." I told him my name, watched him board, and prayed that he would read the literature that he still held in his hand... and that he would have the intelligence to believe the words of warning.

Additional Relevant Information

- What about the issue of suffering? Doesn't this prove that there is no God and that we are on our own? Answer
- SUFFERING - Why does God allow innocent people to suffer? Answer
- What kind of world would you create? Answer
- The Origin of bad - How did bad things come about? Answer
- If God knows I am HURTING, why doesn't He help me? Answer
- Does God feel our pain? Answer
- I am perfectly content as a non-Christian
- Why the Atheist doesn't exist

A skeptic states...

"I am perfectly content as a non-Christian. I do not believe in an afterlife and would never consider a religion so restrictive and exclusive as Christianity anyway."

Answer:

You are content as you are—fair enough. If contentment is what you are after, the Christian faith may not have much to say to you for a while. But lots of things that bring contentment are not true. Would you be willing to consider something if it disturbed your contentment, but might actually be true?

How do you know that there is no conscious existence after death? The main reason that people claim to not believe in an afterlife is that they think that the idea is a naive wish-fulfillment in the face of the fear of death.

But *disbelief* in an afterlife could have the same intellectual status. It could be the hopeful wish that there might be no accountability to anyone after we die, and the hope that there is no intrusive authority in our lives before that time.

Christian exclusiveness starts with the idea that the Gospel of Christ is true in a way that will exclude some other claims to truth. Is this so arrogant? Everybody in the world who has any religious or metaphysical convictions believes that the majority of people in the world are wrong about their religious and metaphysical convictions.

For example, you exclude my convictions. But that's okay. We can talk about it much better knowing where we both stand—two absolutists having a civil discussion.

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There can be no such things as an atheist. This is why: Let's imagine that you are a professing atheist. Here are two questions for you to answer: First, do you know the combined weight of all the sand on all the beaches of Hawaii? We can safely assume that you don't. This brings us to the second question: Do you know how many hairs are on the back of a fully-grown male Tibetan yak? Probably not. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that there are some things that you don't know. It is important to ask these questions because there are some people who think they know everything.



Let's say that you know an incredible one percent of all the knowledge in the universe. To know 100 percent, you would have to know everything. There wouldn't be a rock in the universe that you would not be intimately familiar with, or a grain of sand that you would not be aware of. You would know everything that has happened in history, from that which is common knowledge to the minor details of the secret love life of Napoleon's great-grandmother's black cat's fleas. You would know every hair of every head, and every thought of every heart. All history would be laid out before you, because you would be omniscient (all-knowing).

Bear in mind that one of the greatest scientists who ever lived, Thomas Edison, said, "We do not know a millionth of one percent about anything." Let me repeat: Let's say that you have an incredible one percent of all the knowledge in the universe. Would it be possible, in the ninety-nine percent of the knowledge that you haven't yet come across, that there might be ample evidence to prove the existence of God? If you are reasonable, you will be forced to admit that it is possible. Somewhere, in the knowledge you haven't yet discovered, there could be enough evidence to prove that God does exist.

Let's look at the same thought from another angle. If I were to make an absolute statement such as, "There is no gold in China," what is needed for that statement to be proven true? I need absolute or total knowledge. I need to have information that there is no gold in any rock, in any river, in the ground, in any store, in any ring, or in any mouth (gold filling) in China. If there is one speck of gold in China, then my statement is false and I have no basis for it. I need absolute knowledge before I can make an absolute statement of that nature. Conversely, for me to say, "There is gold in China," I don't need to have all knowledge. I just need to have seen a speck of gold in the country, and the statement is then true.

To say categorically, "There is no God," is to make an absolute statement. For the statement to be true, I must know for certain that there is no God in the entire universe. No human being has all knowledge. Therefore, none of us is able to truthfully make this assertion.

If you insist upon disbelief in God, what you must say is, "Having the limited knowledge I have at present, I believe that there is no God." Owing to a lack of knowledge on your part, you don't know if God exists. So, in the strict sense of the word, you cannot be an atheist. The only true qualifier for the title is the One who has absolute knowledge, and why on earth would God want to deny His own existence?

The professing atheist is what is commonly known as an "agnostic" - one who claims he "doesn't know" if God exists. It is interesting to note that the Latin equivalent for the Greek word is "ignoramus." The Bible tells us that this ignorance is "willful" (Psalm 10:4). It's not that a person can't find God, but that he won't. It has been rightly said that the "atheist" can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman. He knows that if he admits that there is a God, he is admitting that he is ultimately responsible to Him. This is not a pleasant thought for some.

It is said that Mussolini (the Italian dictator), once stood on a pinnacle and cried, "God, if you are there, strike me dead!" When God didn't immediately bow to his dictates, Mussolini then concluded that there was no God. However, his prayer was answered some time later.

Excerpted from *God Doesn't Believe in Atheists* by Ray Comfort