

Good News

From Getwell

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The Spiritual Sword Lectureship

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The Truth in Love

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The Getwell congregation sends monthly support to the following:

Tennessee Children's Home, Spring Hill, TN
West Tennessee Children's Home, Pinson, TN
Potter Children's Home, Bowling Green, KY
Children's Homes, Paragould, AR

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY ACTIVITY

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.

Worship.....10:20 a.m.

Worship.....5:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

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ON THE HOME FRONT

The 44th Spiritual Sword Lectureship is now history. But the lectureship has left a record in printed form in our lectureship book, Opening the Windows of Heaven (\$12.00). We also have the lectures preserved in audio form and in video format. All our past lectures are available on CD's thanks to Charlie Shappley and Jacob E. Wallace. All our past books through 2016 and our past journals through year 48 are available USB (flash drive) and on DVD. These books, lectures and journals are rich resources for all bible students to have in their libraries. Contact the Getwell Church of Christ if you are interested in obtaining any of these resources.

In other matters, the week before the lectureship Bradley Smith, Noah Wallace, and myself traveled to Pulaski, Tennessee to transport the lectureship books to Getwell. It was a very enjoyable trip where we were met by Paul Sain. Paul, besides being an able gospel preacher, is also a very accomplished publisher and a preservationist of audio and video recordings of past gospel preachers. In particular he has a DVD series titled, "Voices From The Past." The tenth volume has recently come out and each volume has 14 lessons. Paul is doing a great service to the brotherhood in preserving these lessons for the future.

Apart from Paul's work as a printer, publisher, preacher, and his work with audio and video recordings. Paul is very involved with G.B.N. with four studios at his facilities in Pulaski. Paul's name could easily be changed to Barnabas because of his encouragement that shines through in his various areas of expertise. He constantly strives to encourage young preachers. I am so glad that Brad and Noah were able to make that trip that day and spend some time with Paul Sain. By the way, the book looks great, thank Paul.

Ron Wallace

Why I Believe What I Believe

Bradley Smith

One of the most common questions that is asked on a daily basis is, "What do you think about...?" This question is asked to gauge opinions on a variety of topics. This question is never more important than in matters of religion. When one answers some of these questions, he may be asked, "Why do you believe that way?" Why is it the case that the way we worship and live is different from the world around us?

Some may answer this question with, "This is the way we have always done it." Is this a valid answer? Tradition is, at times an acceptable guide, but only so far as it is in line with the Word of God (2 The. 2:15). Just because something has always been done the same way does not necessarily make it correct. Satan was a "murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44); does that mean that he is correct in so doing? Of course not, so we see that we do not hold to Biblical principles because "it is the way we have always done it." Some would use this when asked why congregations of the Lord's church do not use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God. Should we rely on the fact that we have always done it that way as our only answer?

Still others may say, "This is what my parents believe." While it is true that it is the role of the father and mother (and other family members) to teach the children in the way that they should go (Pro. 22:6, Eph. 6:4, 2 Tim. 1:5), each individual must make his own decision. Even though someone who was reared in a Christian home has that background, the child that was reared by non-Christian parents will not have that background. It is not suitable for a person to be an atheist because that is what his parents believe, why then should it be suitable for those of us who were brought up in Christian homes to think that our parents' ways are suitable solely because they are our parents.

Why then do I believe as I believe? I believe what I believe not because someone told me I should, and not because it is the way it always has been done, but because God's Word says so. God's Word will never lead you astray (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We should not base our opinions on what men say, but what God says, because ultimately that is what will get us to Heaven (Mat. 7:13-14, 21-23, John 12:48, 2 Cor. 5:10, Rev. 20:12). Let us always speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11), and do only as God's Will says we should, so that one day we may hear those words, "Well done" (Mat. 25:21).

The Despair of Atheism

Part 7

A RESPONSE TO ATHEISM'S DESPAIR

Madalyn Murray O'Hair was the founder of the American Atheist organization. She lived a life in complete rebellion against her God. Her rabid atheism prodded her to attack the idea of God whenever she could. But her atheism could not bring her joy, only a forlorn heart of desperation. When her personal belongings were auctioned, it was discovered that on six different pages of her writings was the heartbreaking cry: "Somebody, somewhere, love me!"³⁰ The greatest tragedy of atheism is that it strips the world of everything meaningful, including real love.

Atheist Dan Barker admitted that, according to atheism, "In the end of the cosmos it's not going to matter. You and I are like ants or rats or like pieces of broccoli, really, in the big picture...there is no value to our species...we are no different than a piece of broccoli in the cosmic sense."³¹ As we have seen, according to atheism, humans are nothing more than matter in motion, "tormented atoms in a bed of mud." Our actions will not determine where we spend eternity. And any "feeling" that one person may have for another person can only be "skin deep." It can only be a product of the physical brain. As much as atheists try to discuss love, hope, honor, or any of the elevated human virtues, they cannot explain how such can exist in a world without God.

Sadly, just like O'Hair, there is a world full of people who want someone to love them, but they refuse to recognize that there is Someone Who does. Their Creator, God, loves them so much that He came to die on the cross for them. Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, gave His life to prove His love for humanity and to show humans that they are not cosmic accidents, but intentionally designed persons who have a meaning and purpose in life. And He gave His life so that those humans who choose to obey Him can live eternally in heaven. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

But God's love has a limit. He will not force anyone to believe in Him. He loves each person enough to let us all freely choose whether or not to believe in and obey Him. And our choice will determine our eternal destiny. Moses once wrote to the Israelites: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). The failure to choose the right beliefs and actions in this life has real consequences. These are not imagined consequences that have to be endowed with meaning by subjective, arbitrary feelings. On the contrary, the consequences are objectively real.

We are not ultimately like broccoli or rats. Our decisions really matter, for now and for eternity. Those who refuse to acknowledge God can have no hope for an afterlife or joy in death, only despair. Agnostic Bart Ehrman, who once claimed to be a Christian, wrote: "The fear of death gripped me for years, and there are still moments when I wake up at night in a cold sweat."³² The Bible explains that Christ came to defeat death, and "release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:15). The only solution to the fear of death and the deep, abiding despair that stems from atheism is to seek God and His will. Madalyn Murray O'Hair's cry, "Somebody, somewhere, love me!" echoes across the world from millions of voices who are trying to find love and hope apart from God. The irony of it all is that they have shut their ears to the voice of God, Who through His Son, calls from the cross, "I love you." Instead of the bleak, tormented, useless, meaningless, purposeless, pitiless, miserable despair that atheism demands, let us turn our faces to the true light, hope, joy, and love that our Creator provides.³³

ENDNOTES

- 1 Kyle Butt (2008), "The Implications of Atheism (Parts 1 & 2)," Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=12&article=911>.
- 2 Alex Rosenberg (2011), *The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life Without Illusions* (New York: W.W. Norton), p. 3, emp. added.

³ Graham Lawton (2016), "What is the Meaning of Life?" *New Scientist*, 231[3089]:33, September 3, emp. added.

⁴ Stephen Gould (1988), "The Meaning of Life," *Life Magazine*, December, <https://www.maryellenmark.com/text/magazines/life/905W-000-037.html>

⁵ Thomas Nagel (1987), *What Does It All Mean? A Brief Introduction to Philosophy* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press), p. 96.

⁶ Richard Dawkins (1995), "God's Utility Function," *Scientific American*, 273[5]:85, November, emp. added.

⁷ Edward O. Wilson (1978), *On Human Nature* (Harvard University Press), <http://staff.washington.edu/lynnhank/Wilson.html>.

⁸ William Provine (1998), "Evolution: Free Will and Punishment and Meaning in Life," <http://eeb.bio.utk.edu/darwin/DarwinDayProvineAddress.htm>, emp. added.

⁹ Albert Camus (1983), *The Myth of Sisyphus*, ed. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage), p. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3. ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹³ As quoted in Tom Chivers' article, "I Asked Atheists How They Find Meaning in a Purposeless Universe," *BuzzFeed*, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/tomchivers/when-i-was-a-child-i-spoke-as-a-child>, emp. added.

¹⁴ Jerry Coyne (2012), "The Odd Couple: Why Science and Religion Shouldn't Cohabitate," Speech to Glasgow Skeptics, December 21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wCiaOQ-2s&noindex=1>, emp. added.

¹⁵ As quoted in Chivers, emp. added.

¹⁶ Tamler Sommers and Alex Rosenberg (2003), "Darwin's Nihilistic Idea: Evolution and the Meaninglessness of Life," *Biology and Philosophy*, 18:653-658.

¹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre (1989), "Existentialism is Humanism," in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman, trans. Philip Mairet (Meridian Publishing Company), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>.

¹⁸ Loyal Rue (1994), *By Grace and Guile: The Role of Deception in Natural History and Human Affairs* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press), p. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* ²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ As quoted in William Lane Craig, "The Absurdity of Life Without God," *Reasonable Faith*, <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/existence-nature-of-god/the-absurdity-of-life-without-god>.

²² Nagel, pp. 100-101.

²³ Woody Allen interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yVPS8XBoBE>.

²⁴ Woody Allen, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MsuqvLlItk>.

²⁵ Quote from Lawrence Krauss as quoted in Austin Brown's *The Case for Utter Hopelessness: Why Atheism Leads to Unyielding Despair* (2017), (Self Published), emp. added.

²⁶ "Poem on the Lisbon Disaster" in Joseph McCabe (1912), *Toleration and Other Essays by Voltaire* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons), <http://people.whitman.edu/~iversojr/Candide/lisbon.htm>, emp. added.

²⁷ Peter Atkins (1984), *The Second Law* (New York: Scientific American), p. 200.

²⁸ Camus, p. 40, emp. added.

²⁹ Bertrand Russell (1910), "Free Man's Worship," <https://users.drew.edu/jlenz/br-free-mans-worship.html>, emp. added.

³⁰ As quoted in an article by Chuck Colson (1999), "The Real Madalyn Murray O'Hair," <http://www.breakpoint.org/1999/06/the-atheists-god/>.

³¹ Quoted from his debate with Paul Monata, July 10, 2006, posted on the radio program "The Infidel Guy," https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzBGd8nA3jj_N181TG10MDB6YUE/view.

³² Bart Ehrman (2008), *God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question—Why We Suffer* (New York: HarperOne), p. 127.

³³ See Eric Lyons and Kyle Butt (no date), *Receiving the Gift of Salvation* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).