**HOPE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

**COURSE:** Relational Evangelism

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**ATHEISM IS A RELIGION**

First, I need to say to all those who consider yourselves to be disciples of Jesus, as a follower of Jesus we are called, may I say, commanded, to love atheists. Some among us used to be such. Many of them are sincere people, just looking for the best way to explain and live life.

Be kind.

Listen.

Love them.

Don’t go to war with them.

Don’t be afraid of them.

Love them.

If they choose to “war” against you, love them anyway. (Do you really need some ‘verses’ to explain why?).

Most of them, just like most of us who have come to Christ, have had questions, doubts or objections about Jesus (more likely “church,” some obnoxious Christian or “religion”) and most of them have never had the opportunity to sit down with someone to hear a good and clear presentation of who Jesus really is and what life with him is all about. Many of them have just “fallen in line” with what some professor or star said that seemed cool or popular. Maybe they knew someone who is a bad example of being a disciple and they concluded they certainly didn’t want to be one. Or they just had bad teachings about who God is and what he really wants from us. Many of those reasons seemingly give people a good reason to “chuck” God. Better to “believe” in nothing than something that seems to be a weird thing. That was my scenario for many years.

Now, back to my simple observation. I’m a simple guy but I’ve worked with a lot of people in life. I know others have probably already written more deeply about this than I am here. I’m going to try and keep it short. Obviously much more could be said.

After writing out my thoughts below, I Googled “religions of the world” and atheism shows up on most of the charts found there. On most studies atheists account for less than 3 percent of the world population. That 3 percent is becoming more vocal in these days, but so what. It really isn’t anything new. And what is worse: a person who claims to be an atheist or a person who claims to be a disciple but is way off track in their teaching or life style? The latter is often on the “inside” doing much more damage to the cause than any atheist could ever dream of.

Now some atheists might not want to be thought of or seen as a religion or being religious but many in the world see them as such. It appears to me that atheism has all the common features of any world religion.
They have a belief system they attempt to spread and solicit followers (convert them), they have doctrine or teachings and beliefs and they espouse those core beliefs as if they were “scripture.” They worship, believe in and trust their beliefs. They defend their beliefs. They can become dogmatic. They profess that THEY have the Truth. It is a system of belief to be spread.

And for every atheist you find, you are likely to find a different explanation or interpretation of all the following items in their belief system. There is no authoritative “bible” for atheists that I have seen.

While I haven’t read it, someone wrote a book titled, *“I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist.”* It might be a good read, but the title explains it clearly. To be an atheist you have to have faith that whatever beliefs you hold are THE TRUTH. If you are wrong, you are in big trouble.

I see atheism as a religion based on the following short list I thought of. Atheists and atheism have:

* A god or various gods, they vary some from atheist to atheist; there is NO ONE god or standard, their god is man himself, “mother nature” (some unidentifiable force at work making all that happens in nature happen.). The god might be a combination of ideas, philosophies or viewpoints which try and explain and account for how we, much less everything else that is here on earth (including earth), got here, what its purpose is, is there any meaning to it all, how life is to be lived, etc.
* Faith. They have faith that their ideas, explanations and philosophies are right. I’ve also discovered that many of them have deep, serious inner doubts about their own views or thoughts. That is understandable.
* Hope. They have to hope that they are right. If not, they are in big trouble.
* Beliefs. They have their beliefs about God, god, life, existence, etc. They vary greatly from atheist to atheist. Each one has to sort of make up their own system in as much as there is NO one definitive system set out for them. So each one picks and chooses what seems to make sense for them.
* Moral system. They have their own system of beliefs. They are varied and most have to be based on a Godless, evolutionary philosophy which in the end is very pessimistic, negative, self-centered and abusive.
* It has laws or commandments. “Thou shalt nots” and “thou shalts.”
* It has traditions, many.
* Salvation = death.
* Heaven - what you make of your life here on earth.
* Atheists “worship” (Webster: to regard with extravagant respect, honor, or devotion) their favorite writers, spokespersons, ideas, philosophies and life style.

And atheism:

* Claims to be the way, the truth and the life.
* Claims to be right.
* It promises a lot. Freedom, intellectual self-respect, etc.
* It has it’s preachers or spokesmen. A few of them are well known. It is interesting how some have claimed that some well known people in history are to be counted among their ranks, while many of those same people stated they weren’t atheists.

Atheism:

* Seeks to proselytize or convert people to their viewpoint or faith.
* It promotes itself: books, pamphlets, brochures, classes, seminars, billboards, TV shows, political campaigns, DVD’s, CD’s, etc.
* Often mocks those of “other faiths.”
* Often judges those of “other faiths” as not being very intelligent but instead superstitious or ignorant.
* Often is intolerant of those of “other faiths.”
* It has its writings, writers, gatherings, web sites, groups, teachings, “evidences” for no God, “evidences” for its gods.
* Testimonies from followers.
* It has its belief in its version of creation or how everything came into existence or got here; evolution; no creation; everything just came out of nothing or has always been here.
* Some of their professors or wise men like to attempt to belittle, mock and quiet those in their school or college classes who have different viewpoints or religious beliefs. Those professors who “pontificate” and mock those who differ from them, and seek to embarrass and humiliate them, are really “little” people. Big titles, little people. Any who act that way are actually insecure and they hide behind their academic titles and positions.

While I respect the right of those who claim to be atheists, I am also aware that many of them are such because of:

* Bad experiences with some religious people. And they dumped God because of that.
* Bad experiences, loses or suffering in life. And they dumped God because of that.
* Never having heard a clear presentation from a legitimate person as to what Jesus is all about. Atheism seems like the most logical route based on the information at hand. I understand that.
* With others it is that they don’t want to give up their chosen life style; they like what they are doing. It is like what was said of the Israelites in the Old Testament when it said “they all did what was right in their own eyes.” Now to do that, or to live MY WAY, I have to get rid of God somehow. That is what is behind some atheists’ choices. It is a license to live with the morals they want and to accept God would hinder that. It is easier to “get rid of God” (good luck) than it is to think about giving up my life style.
* Or as the Bible does say, “The fool says in his heart, there is no God.” It is a heart issue. A hard heart leads to a closed mind.

I have atheist friends. I have many Christian friends who used to be atheists. My dad was a skeptic till he was 79. Hey disciples of Jesus, just love them! Take the abuse if you find yourself with an abusive one. Just love them. Listen to them. Share with them if they are even open to listening. You will likely see chinks in their armor at some point. Some of them just haven’t had anyone share ANY GOOD REASONS WITH THEM AS TO WHY THEY SHOULD BELIEVE AND FOLLOW JESUS. And you surely aren’t going to ARGUE them into changing their mind. Listen, share, love.

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