

**ENGAGING
THE
ATHEISTS**

Facilitated by Dr. Rick Griffith

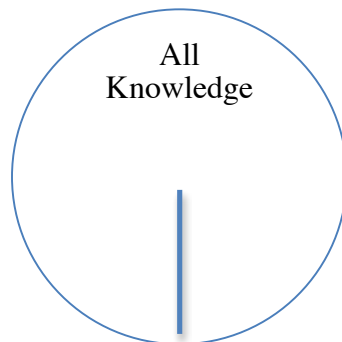
**Saturday, May 16th, 2015
8:30 a.m. at International Church**
20 Dowsett Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96817

Over 2 Million People In The USA Claim To Be Atheists
2% – 8% of The World’s Population Claim To Be Atheists
They Teach That Jesus Was A Myth
They Do Not Believe In Intelligent Design
They Are Becoming More Vocal With Their Beliefs

How To Respond To
Our Atheist Friends
Who Believe Jesus
Is Merely A Myth

The Quick Guide for Dealing with Atheists:

1. Draw a circle with a radius from the edge to the center.
2. Say, “This circle represents all the knowledge of the universe, known and unknown.”
3. Hand the pen to the atheist and say, “Please draw a *second line* from the center to show what piece of the pie represents *your own knowledge* of all that can be known.”
4. Humble atheists will draw a sliver to show they know about 1%. Arrogant atheists will claim to know up to half of all knowledge. I have never seen anyone draw more than half.
5. Say, “Since you know only _____% of the world’s knowledge, would you not agree that God can exist in the majority of the pie that you do not know about?”
6. Whether you friend admits it or not, by claiming that he does not know everything, he has just switched from an atheist to an agnostic. God can exist outside of his knowledge.



Engaging the Atheists

For free downloads of these notes and accompanying PowerPoint slides that visually present these notes, go to the "Theology" link at <http://biblestudydownloads.com>

I. THE NATURE OF THE BATTLE

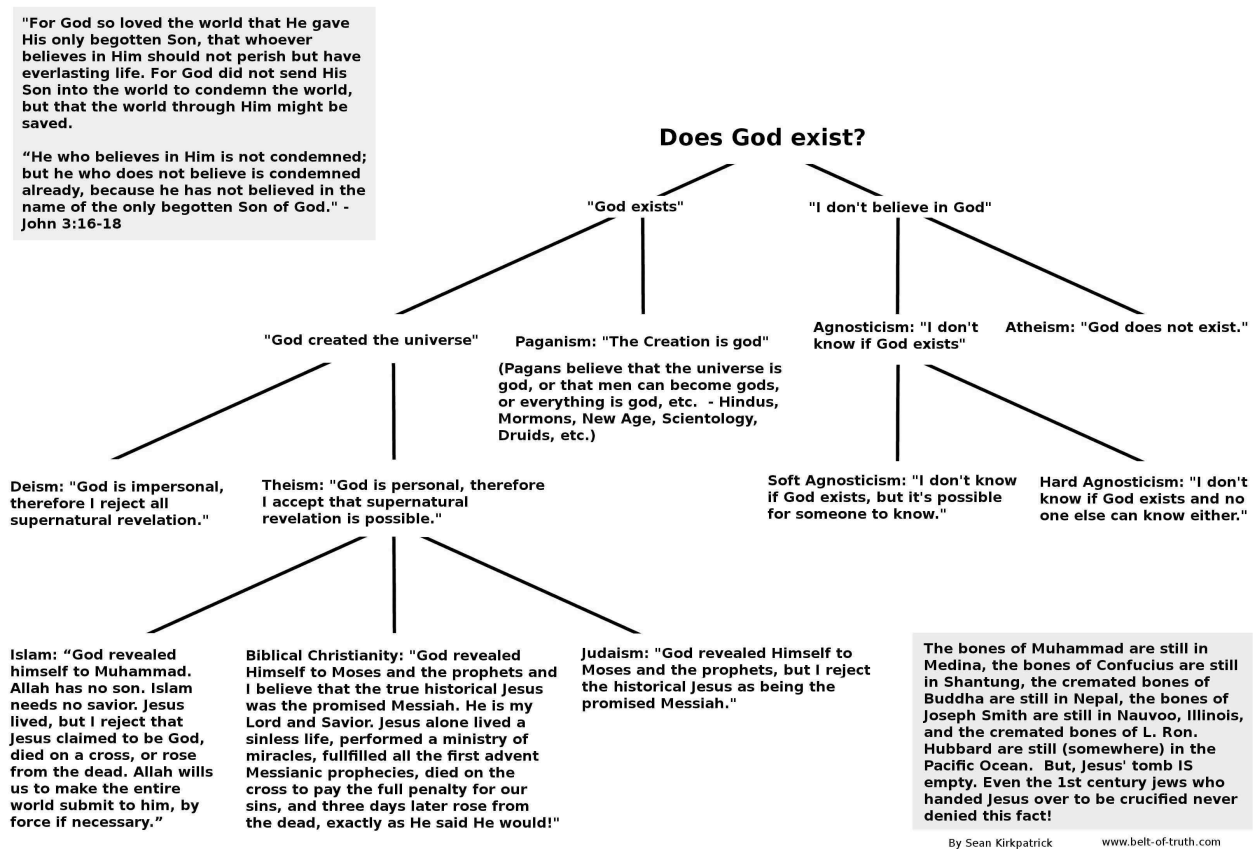
A. The Attack

1. Atheists are more vocal than ever now.
2. They especially go after holidays such as Christmas.

B. Our Response

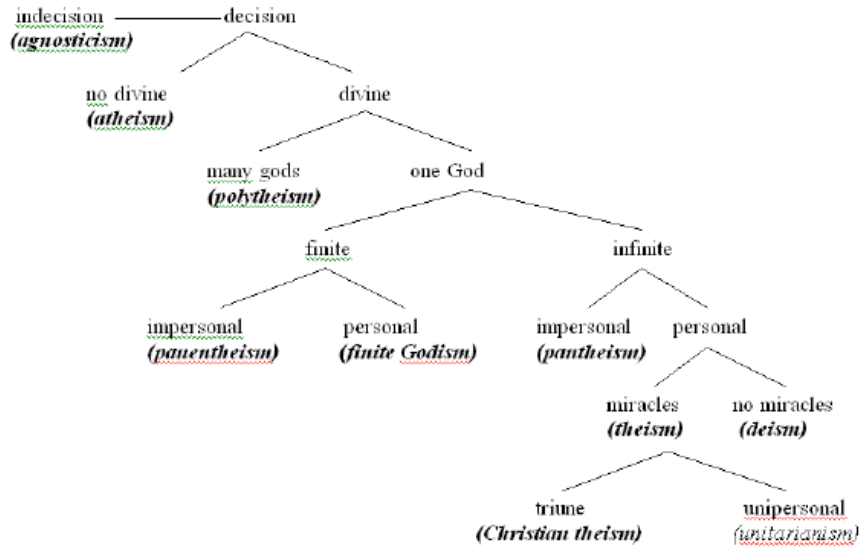
1. Worldviews: We interact with a variety of worldviews today and each seeks to answer the question, "How does God relate to the world?"
 - a) Worldview Chart by Sean Kirkpatrick

Religious Worldview Chart



Source: <http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.belt-of-truth.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Religious-Worldview-Chart1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.belt-of-truth.com/2012/04/14/the-worlds-religions-defined/&h=2550&w=3300&tbnid=y0yzkPMezK5GbM:&zoom=1&docid=1Vr28n1d2k1xvM&ei=CVZVVYuxIor4yASrlGYDw&tbn=isch&ved=0CCgQMygHMtAc&biw=1786&bih=964>

b) Worldview Chart by Norm Geisler



<https://bible.org/seriespage/rationality-christian-worldview>

c) Worldview Diagrams by Rick Griffith



Agnosticism

We cannot be sure if a God is involved in our world (Confucius, Kant, Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Carl Sagan)



Atheism

No God exists or is involved in our world (Dawkins, philosophical Buddhism)



Polytheism

Many gods relate to the worlds (Ancient Near East, Greek & Roman mythology, Mormons)



Panentheism

A finite impersonal god is in the world (animism, Native American religion)



Finite Godism

A finite personal god interacts with the world (Kushner)



Pantheism

An infinite impersonal god is the world itself (Hinduism)



Deism

God created the world but left it alone so no miracles occur (Jefferson, Franklin)



Christian Theism

The Triune God loves our world and works miracles (Biblical view)



Unipersonal Theism

The Unitarian God relates to our world and works miracles (Islam, Jehovah Witnesses)

2. John was clear about the deity of Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14).
3. Nevertheless, truth is always attacked, so Peter admonished us always to be ready to defend our faith with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).
4. Realize that atheism is a faith system, or religion.
5. Since the first century Christians have faced many challenges to their faith. Each century new heresies have forced us to articulate the truth about what we believe.

II. CREATION

A. Argue from Design

1. For all complex things where we know the origin, we know that each had a designer rather than being made from random acts.
2. Arguing from simple to complex, the more complex, the surer we are that the object was designed.
3. The Universe is the most complex system that exists, so it must have had a Designer.
4. Therefore, God must exist.

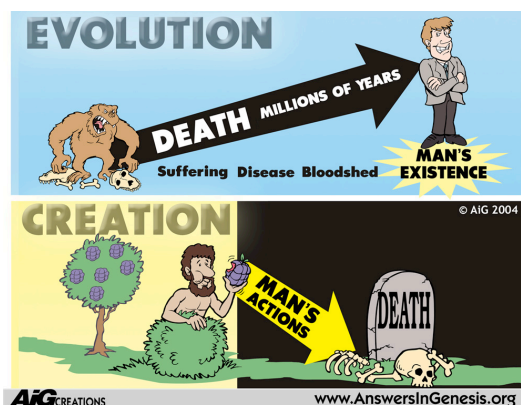
B. Genesis Matters

“Genesis, Science and the Authority of Scripture”
Jackson Hole Bible College, 2-6 Feb. 2015

The Question of Origins—Why It Matters
Dr. Terry Mortenson, Answers in Genesis
Used and Adapted with Permission

1. Introduction
2. Foundations matter: Psalm 11:3
 - a) Genesis is foundational to all other biblical **doctrines**.
 - b) Genesis is foundational to marriage, modesty in clothing, 7-day week, origin of nations, prophecies about the Messiah, etc.
3. Genesis is foundational to the doctrine of death.
 - a) Why is there death?

- b) Key biblical verses on the subject:
- (1) Pre-Fall world: man and animals were **vegetarians** (Gen. 1:29-30).
 - (2) In the Bible, plants are not living souls (Hebrew: *nephesh chayyah*) and don't "die" in the same sense as animals and people do.
 - (a) *Nephesh chayyah* is never used of plants in the OT.
 - (b) Plants don't really die (Job 14:7-12; John 12:24).
- c) The Fall (Gen. 3:14-18; Rom. 8:19-22)
- (1) Serpent judged physically (Gen. 3:14)
 - (2) Animals cursed (Gen. 3:14)
 - (3) Eve judged physically: increased pain in childbirth (Gen. 3:16)
 - (4) Ground was cursed (Gen. 3:17; 5:29)
 - (5) Adam & Eve began to die physically (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22)
 - (6) Implied death: sacrificed animals to make coats of skin (Gen 3:21)
 - (7) Creation in bondage to corruption (Rom. 8:19-23)
- d) Problems of the fossil record
- (1) Fossil thorns in rock layers dated to be 360-408 million years old.
 - (2) Cancer in dinosaur bones
 - (3) Disease in fossil humans "dated" to be much older than any acceptable date for Adam
 - (4) Mass extinctions
 - (5) Fossil graveyards
- e) Two views on the origin of death



C. Stick to Facts

1. Observational science is repeatable. Experiments are conducted to consistently prove laws of nature such as gravity.
2. Historical science is not repeatable. The science of origins is one example of historical science since no one can go back to the beginning of the Universe.

D. The Moral Argument

1. Richard Dawkins admits that Christians are not terrorists.
2. All agree that moral values and duties exist.
3. For example, all people seek justice and meaning—so this proves that an Ultimate Example of justice and purpose exists.

III. THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE

A. The Atheist Attack on Scripture

1. Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* assertion that the supposed "80 gospels" were narrowed down to our four in the NT because of their patriarchal view is untrue. Actually, only about 22 gospels were composed (e.g., *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Mary*, etc.) and all of these except our four canonical ones were from the mid-second to fourth centuries.
2. The church also consistently acknowledged these four gospels (see Appendix 1 chart).
3. The fictional Leigh Teabing provides fiction of his own: "The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book" (*The Da Vinci Code*, 195).

B. The Development of the New Testament

1. Dates: NT writings were composed from the AD 40s (James) to AD 94-95 (Revelation). For details, please see my NT Survey notes, 41-43.
2. Canonicity: How did the early church identify which letters were inspired?
 - a) *Apostolic Authority*: An apostle or someone under the guidance of an apostle composed each NT book (Luke under Paul, Mark under Peter).
 - b) *Early & Widespread Acceptance*: The NT letters were not accepted simply by one man, Constantine (*contra* Brown), but by churches in Palestine, Turkey, Egypt, Greece, Italy, etc. In fact, NT letters were considered inspired even as they were being written.
 - (1) Paul wrote in AD 62 that churches should pay their leaders well (1 Tim. 5:18). He argued that the "Scripture" said not to muzzle the ox while it treads the grain (quoting Deut. 25:4) and that "the worker deserves his wages." This latter scriptural support quotes Luke 10:7 as inspired, even though Luke's gospel was written no more than five years earlier (likely written in AD 57-59 during Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea).
 - (2) Peter also said in AD 64 that false teachers misinterpreted Paul's letters, just "as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:15-16). The ink was hardly dry on Paul's epistles (penned AD 49-62), with Titus and 2 Timothy not even written—but Paul's epistles were already considered equal to OT Scriptures.
 - c) *Consistency of Doctrine*: Nothing in the NT writings contradicts the OT corpus. This requirement excludes the heretical *Gospel of Thomas* and *Gospel of Philip*, which Brown uses as sources for his beliefs.
3. These books were not all recognized at the same time. Some took longer to establish such credibility due to particular problems (e.g., the authorship of Hebrews and 2 Peter, the supposed discrepancy between James and Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, etc.). Appendix 1 shows that by Irenaeus' time (AD 130-202) most were already accepted, and at

the Council of Hippo (AD 393) all 27 were accepted. In AD 180 Irenaeus noted that all agreed upon our four gospels.¹

- C. Skeptics like Dan Brown says Emperor Constantine invented the deity of Christ at the Council of Nicaea (AD 325).² What can be said in response?
1. Would Christians who “believed that Jesus was only a man” really need to worship secretly in the catacombs? The Romans would have had no problem with them believing in the principles of a crucified man. The “problem” was that believers saw Jesus as God, which the empire saw as a threat.
 2. Would Christians who “believed that Jesus was only a man” die as martyrs? Hardly! Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, refused emperor worship and was fed to wild beasts in Rome. Perpetua (AD 203) and many others died for their belief in Christ’s deity.
 3. The Council only *affirmed* this teaching against the Arian heresy that claimed Christ was created—it did not *create* it. While he claims the Council vote was “close,” it actually was 300-2 in favor of upholding Christ’s deity.³ Also, of the 20 rulings at Nicea, none of them related to the canon of the NT.
 4. Paul and early creeds affirmed Jesus as God almost immediately (Rom. 9:5; cf. Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8-9; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:2) and the gospels agree (e.g., John 1:1, 18; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28).
 5. Many church fathers affirmed Christ’s deity before Nicaea:⁴
 - Ignatius: “God Himself was manifest in human form” (AD 105)
 - Clement: “It is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as of God” (AD 150)
 - Irenaeus: “He is God, for the name Emmanuel indicates this” (AD 180)
 - Tertullian: “... Christ our God” (AD 200)
 - Origen: “No one should be offended that the Savior is also God” (AD 225)
 - Lactantius: “We believe Him to be God” (AD 304)

¹ Irenaeus warned of heretics that used only one gospel, such as Marcion, who rejected the OT and all gospels except his own edition of Luke. Irenaeus said that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were “the four pillars of the Church” and that “it is not possible that there can be either more or fewer than four.” He presented the analogy of the four corners of the earth and the four winds (*Against Heresies* 3.11.8).

² Brown’s view of Jesus is taught through “historian” Leigh Teabing: “My dear,” Teabing declared, “until [AD 325], Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal.” [Sophie:] “Not the Son of God?” “Right,” Teabing said. “Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea” (p. 197, emphasis his).

³ Paul L. Maier in *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* with Hank Hanegraaff (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2004), 15, notes, “The two dissenting bishops were Secundus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Mamarica, both Libyan bishops associated with Arius. All three went into exile after the Council of Nicea. See Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 217” (p. 73, n. 6).

⁴ David Bercot, ed. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1998), 93-100; cited in Garlow & Jones, 94.

D. What is the truth of the matter here? The Bible is the *best*-attested book of antiquity.⁵

1. The accuracy of the OT copies is astonishing:

The Dead Sea Scrolls included two copies of Isaiah from 200 BC. A comparison with the AD 1000 Isaiah scroll shows astounding accuracy:⁶

TABLE 1. QUMRAN VS. THE MASORETES

Of the 166 Hebrew words in Isaiah 53, only seventeen letters in Dead Sea Scroll 1QIsb differ from the Masoretic Text.

10 letters = spelling differences

4 letters = stylistic changes

3 letters = added word for "light" (vs. 11)

17 letters = no affect on biblical teaching

2. The accuracy of the NT copies is astonishing:

- a) The number of Greek copies is presently 5,686. Add to this over 14,000 non-Greek manuscripts of the NT plus OT manuscripts and the figure is 24,772 MSS.
- b) Even with over 20,000 manuscripts, they are so close that we are virtually certain of 97-98% of the NT.
- c) The time interval between the original and existing copies is very short:
 - (1) Our oldest copy of most ancient documents is 1000+ years after the original.
 - (2) The NT has copies as early as 150 years away from the original autographs.

⁵ Norman Geisler, *The Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 532.

⁶ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *Introduction to the NT* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 382; cited by Garry K. Brantley, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Biblical Integrity" at <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/266>.

E. Extant Copies of Pagan Writings

How reliable are the NT manuscripts in comparison to other ancient sources? Compare the following secular manuscript dates to the time of their original autographs, as well as the few copies available. This stands in stark contrast to the NT writings that number 24,772 manuscripts (5,488 Greek and 19,284 other). Some of these Greek manuscripts are within 100-200 years of the original autographs! One fragment from John's gospel even dates from AD 135, which is only 40 years after the original (assuming the most commonly held AD 95 date for John)! (For more information, see Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 40).

Dallas Theological
Seminary

NT Introduction 205
John D. Grassmick

ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS AND THEIR RELIABILITY

AUTHOR	WHEN WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME SPAN	NUMBER
1. Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs.	100
2. Herodotus (History)	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 800	1300 yrs.	8
3. Eripedes	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1500 yrs.	9
4. Thucydides (History)	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	8
5. Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs.	10
6. Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs.	7
7. Aristotle (Poetics)	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400 yrs.	5
8. Demosthenes	383-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs.	200*
9. Caesar (Gallic Wars)	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000 yrs.	10
10. Livy (History)	59 B.C.-A.D. 17	A.D. 900	1000 yrs.	20
11. Lucretius	55-53 B.C. (?)		1100 yrs.	2
12. Catullus	54 B.C.	A.D. 1550	1600 yrs.	3
13. Tacitus (Annals)	A.D. 55-120	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs.	20
14. Pliny the Younger (History)	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs.	7
15. Suetonius (De Vita Caesarum)	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs.	8

* all from one copy

IV. THE PERSON OF JESUS

A. Primary First to Second Century Sources that Mention Jesus

1. Roman Historians: Suetonius (AD 69-ca. 121), Tacitus (AD 55—ca. 120), and Pliny the Younger (ca. AD 62-ca. 113).
2. Jewish Historian: Josephus (AD 37-ca. 100), *The History of the Jewish War Against the Romans* (AD 77); *The Antiquities of the Jewish People*, 20 vols. (AD 93).

B. Roman Historian Citations

1. Pliny the Younger (ca. AD 62—ca. 113) is not technically a historian. However, as governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, his letters to Emperor Trajan provide many historical insights (cf. pp. 160 #14). In one letter he asks advice on how to treat Christians who had been growing in his province (p. 160a):
 - a) He notes that the believers gathered regularly on a certain day (Sunday?) “to sing responsively a hymn to Christ as if to a god” (*Epistle* 10.96).
 - b) This is *the earliest Roman (Latin) reference to Jesus Christ* (AD 113). The Jewish historian Josephus is the earliest reference from all sources (AD 93-94; cf. p. 172).
2. Tacitus (AD 55—ca. 120) was one of the most reliable Roman historians.
 - a) His histories are *The Annals* (AD 115; cf. p. 160 #13) on emperors Tiberius (AD 14) to Nero (AD 68) and *A History* that finishes the narrative until Domitian (AD 96).
 - b) Tacitus makes the second earliest Roman reference to Christ (AD 115) concerning the persecutions of Christians under Nero: “Their name comes from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius as emperor was condemned to death by the procurator Pontius Pilate” (*Annals* 15.44).
3. Suetonius (AD 69—ca. 121) served as beneficiary to Emperor Trajan and secretary to Hadrian, which provided him access to official archives (cf. p. 160 #15).
 - a) His *Lives of the Caesars* (AD 120) traces the Roman emperors from Julius Caesar (44 BC) to Domitian (AD 96), including history, customs, and chronology.
 - b) In chapter 25 gives the third earliest Latin reference to Jesus (AD 120), noting (inaccurately) Claudius' expulsion of Jews from Rome “who had been continually stirring up trouble under the influence of Chrestus [sic]” (cf. Acts 18:2).

Pliny and Trajan

Pliny the Younger was governor of Pontus/Bithynia from AD 111-113. We have a whole set of exchanges of his letters with the emperor Trajan on a variety of administrative and political matters. These two letters are the most famous, in which Pliny encounters Christianity for the first time.

Pliny, Letters 10.96-97

Pliny to the Emperor Trajan.

It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age or no difference between the very young and the more mature; whether pardon is to be granted for repentance, or, if a man has once been a Christian, it does him no good to have ceased to be one; whether the name itself, even without offenses, or only the offenses associated with the name are to be punished.

Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome.

Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ—none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do—these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ.

They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food—but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.

I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seemed to me to warrant consulting you, especially because of the number involved. For many persons of every age, every rank, and also of both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found. Hence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of people can be reformed if an opportunity for repentance is afforded.

Trajan to Pliny

You observed proper procedure, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians. For it is not possible to lay down any general rule to serve as a kind of fixed standard. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and proved guilty, they are to be punished, with this reservation, that whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it—that is, by worshipping our gods—even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance. But anonymously posted accusations ought to have no place in any prosecution. For this is both a dangerous kind of precedent and out of keeping with the spirit of our age.

C. **Josephus** (AD 37—ca. 100) is the key Jewish historian and apologist of the NT era

1. **Life**

- a) Josephus' father was a Jewish priest (Mattathias) and his mother a Hasmonean descendant. He joined the Pharisees at age 19 but remained a nominal member.
- b) At age 27 he visited Rome (AD 64), but upon returning to Judea he reluctantly led a Jewish force in Galilee against the Romans. This lasted only six months during the first part of the Jewish Revolt against Rome (AD 66-73), but at his capture he prophesied that the Roman general Vespasian would become emperor. After this episode he saw the war from the Roman ranks, acting as a translator and mediator to convince Jews to lay down their arms in view of Rome's military superiority. When his prophecy came true he was freed from his chains. His eyewitness account of Jerusalem's fall was seen from outside the walls.
- c) After Jerusalem's fall he joined the Emperor Vespasian in Rome as a friend under lifetime pension of the Empire (he took on the emperor's family name, "Flavius"). This gave him the time and money to write as a historian and apologist of the Jews. However, most Jews continued to view him as a traitor living in luxury (in the late Vespasian's mansion) with the victorious enemy until his death soon after AD 100.

2. **Writings** (all from Rome)

- a) *The History of the Jewish War Against the Romans* (AD 77) is often abbreviated as *Jewish War* or simply *War*. This work chronicles the bravery of both the Jews and the Romans in the Jewish Revolt (AD 66-73).
- b) *The Antiquities of the Jewish People* (AD 93-94) records the history of the Jewish people from creation to AD 66 in a massive 20 volumes. Josephus intended to complete the missing history (AD 73-93) but died before he could do so.
- c) *Vita* means *Life*, as it is his own autobiography. This seeks to rebut accusations by rival historian Justus of Tiberias that he encouraged the Jewish rebellion. It emphasizes his six months as commander in Galilee.
- d) *Against Apion* is a two-volume defense of the Jews against the scholarly accusations of the Gentile critic Apion. Actually, volume 1 is mistitled *Against Apion* for it defends *Antiquities* against Greeks and Egyptians who disbelieved it while only volume 2 addresses Apion.
- e) English Sources: The standard English version of Josephus has been William Whiston's since AD 1737. Whiston believed Josephus became a Christian (even Bishop of Jerusalem!) at the end of his life, but few if any hold this to be true. Paul Maier abridged and updated the language of *Wars* and *Antiquities*. See also the standard concordance by K. H. Rengstorff, ed., *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus* (4 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1973-83) and a brief historical introduction to Josephus by Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., *The Topical Josephus* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1992).

3. **Evaluation**—Josephus was a reliable historian with some exceptions:
- Roman bias:** He paints the Zealots as insurrectionists while the Romans enjoyed God’s favor due to the Zealot apostasy.
 - Exaggerations:** His accounting of numbers is unreliable. (Yet this is typical of ancient works; some think he didn’t want Romans to look small in comparison!)
 - Egotism:** He ends *Antiquities* saying, “No one else, either Jew or gentile, would have been equal to this task” (*Ant.* 20.11.2 in Maier, 277; cf. Whiston, 4:148).
 - Digressions** from a theme plague his writings but provide valuable backgrounds.
4. **Significance**— Josephus gives the earliest non-Christian witnesses to the historicity of Jesus Christ (AD 93-94) in two separate statements, one short and one long:
- Short:** His account of how James, the brother of Jesus, was killed by the high priest Ananus (Annas) mentions Jesus: “Convening the judges of the Sanhedrin, he [Annas] brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law, and condemned them to be stoned to death” (*Ant.* 20.9.1 in Maier, 276; cf. Whiston, 4:140). Josephus inaccurately refers to James as the brother of Jesus (cf. Acts 12:1-2).
 - Long:** This statement has two versions, the later Christian one due to interpolation (*Ant.* 18.3.3 in Maier, 264; cf. Whiston, 4:11):

Jewish Version	Christian Version
Likely the original based on 10th cent. Arabic MSS of the Melkite historian Agapius, for Josephus almost certainly did not become a Christian (<i>contra</i> Whiston, 4:427)	Likely interpolated in the <i>italic</i> statements by a well-meaning Christian before the time of Eusebius (AD 324)
“At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. <u>They reported that he appeared</u> to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive. Accordingly, <u>he was perhaps the Messiah</u> , concerning whom the prophets have reported wonders. And the tribe of the Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day.”	“About this time lived Jesus, a wise man, <i>if indeed one ought to call him a man</i> . For he was the achiever of extraordinary deeds and was a teacher of those who accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. <i>He was the Messiah</i> . When he was indicted by the principal men among us and Pilate condemned him to be crucified, those who had come to love him originally did not cease to do so; for <i>he appeared to them</i> on the third day restored to life, as the prophets of the Deity had foretold these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day.”

So don’t let anyone convince you that the NT is the only ancient source that speaks of Jesus! Our faith is built on solid historical evidence.

V. OUR CONTEXT

(What about society today gives this ridiculous book such a following?)

A. Entertainment Better Than Truth

1. James Frey, author of the 2005 bestseller *A Million Little Pieces*, confessed in January 2006 that he really wasn't a criminal, didn't go to jail, etc. even though these were key aspects of his "autobiography."
2. When confronted with these fabrications, this was his response: "The writer of a memoir is retailing a subjective story." His friend, Oprah Winfrey, commented on 12 January 06 that this insistence on truth was "much ado about nothing," yet later recanted and expressed disappointment in Frey's lying.⁷
3. Literary theorist Stanley Fish also noted in this vein that the death of objectivity "relieves me of the obligation to be right"; it "demands only that I be interesting."⁸

B. Subjectivity characterizes our age

1. Movies rarely espouse any form of absolute authority.
2. All literary sources are considered of equal authority.
 - a) Dan Brown's key sources are Gnostic, which he assumes to have equal authority to Scripture and had two main forms.

Docetic Gnosticism	Cerinthian Gnosticism
From <i>dokeo</i> , "to seem" (Christ only seemed to be a man)	From Cerinthus, the founder in Asia (Christ only seemed to be God)
Matter is Evil	Spirit is Good
Depreciated Materialism	Exalted Knowledge (<i>gnosis</i>)
Denied Christ's Humanity	Denied Christ's Deity
Touched Jesus (1:1)	Water & Blood (5:6)
Led to Asceticism	Led to Pride
Immorality exalted	Education exalted

- b) *The Gospel of Judas* recently discovered makes Judas the hero of the passion story—chosen by Christ as chief over the disciples in Jesus' own plot to betray him. The media neglects to note that this is a Gnostic gospel with no Christian teaching at all, which only proves that heresy existed in the second century. Irenaeus noted in AD 180 that the church rejected this false gospel.⁹

3. Commentators serve up opinion instead of news.

⁷ AP Jan. 27, 06, "Frey Admits Lying; Oprah Apologizes to Viewers" (msnbc.msn.com/id/11030647)

⁸ Quoted in Michiko Kakutani, "Truth Fast Losing Its Value in Non-Fiction," *The Sunday Times* [Singapore], 22 January 2006, p. 33 reprint of *The New York Times*. Stanley Fish is the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at University of Illinois at Chicago and one of the most influential and controversial theorists and critics of literature, law, and philosophy of our time.

⁹ "They [the false teachers] declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the *Gospel of Judas*" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.31.1) in <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103131.htm>).

4. Talk shows and talk radio (46% of USA radio) give a venue for uninformed publicity.
5. Reality TV (over 50% of USA TV programming) continually degenerates to retain viewers, having no moral compass.
6. Blogging gives an outlet to air any view publicly with no checks and balances.

VI. OUR RESPONSE

- A. Know both the Word and the enemy arguments.
 1. Know the Best Book first.
 - a) Read God's Word every day so you know it better than any other book.
 - b) Memorize key passages.
 2. Listen to your atheist friend to find out the reasons for rejecting God.
 - a) In most cases, the reason is not philosophical or theological.
 - b) Rather, there exists a deep hurt caused by a believer or someone thought to be a believer.
- B. Share the Pie Illustration (see the cover of these notes) to help the atheist to see that he or she is actually an agnostic.
- C. Share the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-5):
 1. Christ died for our sins.
 2. He was buried.
 3. He was raised the third day.
 4. We can have eternal life by simple belief in his name (John 3:16).

Appendix 1: Developing the Canon

The New Testament Canon During the First Four Centuries

BOOK	INDIVIDUALS										CANONS				TRANSLATIONS			COUNCILS											
	PSUEDO-BARNABAS (c. 70-130)	CLEMENT OF ROME (c. 95-97)	IGNATIUS (c. 110)	POLYCARP (c. 110-50)	HERMAS (c. 115-40)	DIDACHE (c. 120-50)	PAPIAS (c. 130-40)	IRENAEUS (c. 130-202)	DIODORUS (c. 150)	JUSTIN MARTYR (c. 150-55)	CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c. 150-215)	ORIGEN (c. 185-254)	CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (c. 315-86)	JEROME (c. 340-420)	AUGUSTINE (c. 400)	MARCION (c. 140)	MURATORIAN (c. 170)	BAROCCIO (c. 206)	APOSTOLIC (c. 300)	CHELTHENHAM (c. 360)	ATHANASIUS (367)	TATIAN DIATESSARON (c. 170)	OLD LATIN (c. 150-170)	OLD SYRIAC (c. 200)	NICEA (c. 325-40)	HIPPO (393)	CARTHAGE (397)	CARTHAGE (419)	
Matt.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Luke	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
John	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Acts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rom.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1 Cor.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2 Cor.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gal.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eph.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Phil.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Col.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1 Thess.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2 Thess.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1 Tim.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2 Tim.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Titus	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Philemon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Heb.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
James	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1 Peter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2 Peter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1 John	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2 John	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3 John	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jude	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rev.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Taken with adaptation from William E. Nix and Norman L. Geisler, Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody, 1968). Used by permission.

X = Citation or allusion
 O = Named as authentic
 ? = Named as disputed

Appendix 2: NT Teaching on False Teaching

This chart shows that many New Testament writings responded to false teaching or persecution. Notice also how often persecuted recipients were encouraged with the eschatological hope of Christ's return. The key NT texts of entire books that emphasize eschatology appear in **bold** print.

	False Teaching	Persecution	Eschatological Hope
Matthew		by Jews (AD 40s)	13:1-52; 24:1—25:46
Mark		by Romans (AD 60s)	13:1-37
Luke			21:5-38
John	<u>AD 60s</u>	by Romans (AD 60s or 90s)	
Acts		by Romans (AD 60s)	2:16-20, 25, 34-35, 40
Romans	❶ 2:1-4		11:25-27; 13:11-14
1 Corinthians	15:12, 58		15:12-58
2 Corinthians	<u>3:1; 10:10; 11:3-4</u>		
Galatians	❷ 1:6-9; 3:1		
Ephesians			
Philippians	3:2-4, 9, 18-19	1:13, 28-30	1:6, 10; 2:10, 16; 3:20-21
Colossians	<u>2:8, 16-23</u>		
1 Thessalonians	❸ 4:8	1:6; 3:6	1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-5:11, 23
2 Thessalonians	1:8-9; 2:1-3; 3:2, 6	1:4-7; 3:2	1:9-10; 2:1-12
1 Timothy	<u>1:3-11; 4:1-3, 7; 6:3-5</u>	1:18-19; 6:12	4:8; 6:14, 19
2 Timothy	❹ 3:6-9; 4:3-4	1:8	3:1-9
Titus	1:10-16		
Philemon			
Hebrews	<u>2:1</u>	10:30-32	1:11-13; 4:1-11
James		1:2-4	5:7-9
1 Peter		1:6-7; 3:8-17	1:5, 20; 4:7; 5:4
2 Peter	❺ 2:1-22	3:3-13	1:16; 3:3-15
1 John	2:18-19; 4:1-3		
2 John	<u>vv. 7, 9</u>		
3 John	❻ vv. 9-11		
Jude	v. 4	v. 19	vv. 14-18, 24-25
Revelation	2:14-15, 20	2:13	1:1, 5-8; 2:27; 3:5, 12, 21; chs. 4-22
	19	15	17

The texts in the false teaching column above divide into texts for six small groups (from the number until and including the underlined passage below it). Read the passages for your group and state any principles that they show on how believers should respond to heresy. Word them as commands in universal truths.