

B A D I D E A S

REMOVING ROADBLOCKS TO KNOWING GOD

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

~ The Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

BAD IDEA #2: *We Don't Need God to be Good*

APPETIZER: Forms of the Debate

All morality is personally subjective or socially constructed within societies. Nothing is absolute. (Most atheists.)

- But this contradicts both our intuitions and our actions. We sense and live like there are objective moral absolutes.

Morality is whatever choices lead to maximum flourishing of conscious creatures as determined by brain science. (Sam Harris)

- This favours the scientifically advanced, making basic morality unattainable for most humans in most places at most times.

Theistic morality is arbitrary and often leads to greater evil, therefore it must be exchanged in favour of atheism. (Bill Maher)

- But without God, upon what basis can we call anything "evil"?

LOVE: the choice to value someone in attitude and action; the choice to relate to someone according to their worth; active other-inclusiveness.

NOTE: Morality only exists when _____ is involved.

DINE IN: Why Jesus Is Necessary

Romans 2:1-16

Religulous Premise: Atheism is more moral than religion (or "God" in general) and therefore we should be evangelistic for non-faith/atheism.

RELIGION

1. Increases our sense of moral superiority.
2. Enflames righteous anger.
3. And therefore justifies anything.

ATHEISM

1. Increases our sense of moral ambiguity.
2. Removes the category of evil.
3. And therefore justifies anything.

We need Jesus!

Matthew 5:43-44; 7:12; Luke 6:31; Galatians 5:14; Romans 13:8-10

TAKE OUT: Asking Questions About Specific Examples

GETTING TO THE POINT...

- Do you think that some things are just plain wrong no matter what the context or culture? Like, say, child abuse?
- Is this belief just a product of evolution or cultural conditioning? (If so, then it isn't absolutely wrong, is it? It could change over time, as culture and context changes. Is that what you believe?)
- If some morality is transcendent (not a matter of culture or context, but right or wrong no matter what), then where does that morality come from?
- Doesn't morality need **personhood** to exist? Are non-persons (say, energy and objects, like lightning and rocks) moral? What "person" is your morality grounded in?
- Without God, we are free to do terrible things. Yet with God, through some religions, we are sometimes commanded to do terrible things.
- What we need is the moral authority of God, but a God who is committed to love, peace, reconciliation, and creation care.
- **Only Jesus** will show us this God who is Love.

IN THE MEANTIME...

Become spiritually curious about your friends' beliefs and ask them lots of questions!

NEXT WEEK: BAD IDEA #3: *Christians Follow the Bible*

With special guest Brian Zahnd!



Home Church Questions

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic – in one Large Group]

1. After reviewing Sunday's message, talk about something you learned or some question that remains.
2. **ROLE PLAY!** Take turns in pairs, or as a group, responding to someone who says...
 - a. "We don't need God to be good. I'm a good person, and I'm an atheist."
 - b. "Morality is a cultural construct. It came about through evolution, to help tribes live together better. We don't need God to explain ethics."
 - c. "The real problem is religion, which makes people more violent, not less. We should hope more people become atheists, for the good of humanity."

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture – in Discussion Groups]

3. Read **Romans 2:1-16**.
 - a. What verse or idea stands out to you the most? Why?
 - b. In chapter 1, Paul has just set up his pious readers, equating the guilt of gay sex (a most scandalous sin in their context) with greed, gossip, and disobeying parents. With that in mind, what is Paul's point in the first few verses of chapter 2?
 - c. What is the difference between passing judgement on someone and correcting someone who sins, which we are instructed to do in other passages (e.g., Matthew 18:16-17, 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, Galatians 2:11-14)?
 - d. In verse 4 Paul says that God's "kindness" should lead us to repentance, not his judgement, wrath, or threat of hell. How should this affect Christian evangelism?
 - e. Paul seems to describe a judgement based on works in verses 5-13. How does that fit into a gospel of salvation by grace through faith? (Hint: this is only chapter 2 of a very long book.) Use other passages of Scripture in your answer.
 - f. Whether someone is a Christian or not, a theist or atheist, we are all moral for one specific reason: What does Paul say that is in verses 14-15? How does this affect your answer to 2-a above?

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together – in Huddles]

4. Use your Huddle Handout Questions and pray for one another.

Quotes

Welcome to our new series about common bad ideas that interfere with people knowing God.

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~ The Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

Today's Bad Idea: We Don't Need God to Be Good

Moral relativism tends to be self-contradictory. Relativists may say that moral truths exist only relative to a specific cultural framework – but THIS claim about the status of moral truth purports to be true across all possible frameworks.

~ Sam Harris, The Moral Landscape

The only way we can speak of things being truly right and wrong is if there is a reality about these matters which stands apart from the material world.

~ Justin Brierley, Unbelievable?

My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust
What was I comparing the universe with when I called it unjust?

~ C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

If the Moral Law is just a side effect of evolution, then there is no such thing as good or evil. It's all an illusion.

~ Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health

Morality is something we discover like archaeologists, not something we build like architects.

~ Leah Libresco, former atheist

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

~ Jesus