

Atheists Are Right That Christianity Sounds Absurd, but I Believe in It

From an outside observer's standpoint, Christianity is kind of absurd.

Think about it. We believe in an invisible man who lived over 2,000 years ago in a series of backwater towns in the Middle East, was killed by some religious zealots, and then was magically raised from the dead three days later, after which he floated up into the sky and disappeared, thus becoming the invisible man we now believe in and pin all our hopes to. Oh, and on top of that, we believe in other invisible beings: angels and demons—who are all around us, helping and influencing us. Meanwhile, another invisible Spirit (the Holy Spirit) is constantly at work behind the scenes around the earth, keeping the whole thing straight and intervening whenever He can.

When put that way, even I think it sounds crazy. I consider myself a fairly intelligent person. I'm a former university professor, an author of two books (*Filming God* and *Finding God in the Bible*), and I've become something of a spokesperson not just for the existence of God through my films (*Finger of God*, *Furious Love*, *Father of Lights* and *Holy Ghost*), but for the idea that this invisible God is alive and well and doing amazing things in our world today. How then can I, as a rational, intelligent human being, actually believe in invisible men and spirits?

I ask this question because it seems that lately a good number of people have been coming out and saying that no, they don't believe this nonsense anymore. From Christian rock stars (Tim Lambesis—*As I Lay Dying*; George Perdikis—co-founder of

Newsboys) to pastors (Ryan Bell), former Christians seem to be taking a long, hard look at their faith and are finding the courage to step forward and voice their opinion: that they think this is all nuts. I have a feeling they aren't alone in their struggles with belief, and the reasons for this crisis of faith are surely varied and compelling. But like everyone else, at the end of the day I am only truly responsible for myself, and I wanted to step forward and try to explain why I will continue to believe in an invisible God-man, no matter what.

For a good portion of my life, I lived a kind of Christianity that I have a sneaking suspicion most people do as well. It was built around a set of pre-informed beliefs and its orbit was made up almost exclusively with well-meaning principles—all of which were gleaned from the Bible and were designed to both make my life better and make me into a relatively nice person. Jesus was the centerpiece, of course, but He was more of a benevolent, distant brother figure. God was relatively silent on most things—and He always loomed large in my “be good or else” mentality. The Holy Spirit was like smoke, a guiding force if you will, but one that was totally unknowable. This was Christianity, for sure, but it was a neutered one. I simply had to believe the right things, be a good person and not do too many bad things. If I did make mistakes, I had to make sure I said I was sorry, otherwise a kind of logjam of sin would start to build up, which was not good.

When your life is centered around trying to “be good,” there comes a point when it all just feels fake and forced. I mean, if Jesus is real, shouldn't my life be different? Shouldn't I have this peace He kept talking about inside me? Should I really have to try THIS hard to change my behavior? And after a while, when principles are all that generally guide you, it just becomes too much and you wind up doing the Christian thing simply because you think you should and because that's

what you've always done.

But then something happened, and this is where everything changed for me. I experienced God. I am a rational person, and I am not prone to manic episodes, hallucinations or strange behavior. I've never done drugs a day in my life. I don't "feel" things spiritually, have never been "slain in the spirit," and I've never even spoken in tongues. But while making these films of mine, I experienced the reality and presence of God. I felt Him inside me and around me. My behavior changed, I felt peace for the first time, and my Christian walk was no longer about following principles, but about following a Person. And yes, that Person was invisible.

How do you explain experiencing God to someone who has never experienced Him themselves? It's a lot like trying to explain love to someone who has never been in love before. They can be surrounded by people in love, can see how strange it makes people behave, can understand the concept of love; they can even see the dangers of falling in love with that person over this person, but unless you've actually fallen in love with someone, you'll never be able to understand the feeling it gives you or the certainty that you are, in fact, in love, and that it is very, very real.

So it is no surprise to me that a pastor who decides to "take a year off from God" comes out the other side as an atheist. Honestly, it would be impossible for me to take even a week off from God, because I have experienced Him firsthand. I know He's there; I can't ignore Him. No one who actually experiences God will ever deny His existence. For instance, for my new film, *Holy Ghost Reborn*, I filmed a ministry in Colorado that provides prayer and teaching almost exclusively to military personnel. Most of the participants go into this three-day intensive as either atheists or nominal believers at best. All of them—a full 100%—come out of these 3 days believing in Jesus. Why? Because they just experienced Him for

themselves. And you can't deny something that you have actually experienced. My guess is that the vast majority of people who have turned their hearts from God never actually experienced Him in the first place. They may have heard and believed, but the reality of His presence never took root because believing something logically is not the same as experiencing it relationally.

Yes, believing in someone who is invisible seems, on the surface, a little crazy. But just as Billy Graham once pointed out, we believe in the wind not because we can see it, but because we can see the effects of it. We can feel it on our faces, see it whipping through tree branches. I believe in an invisible God not because I can see Him, but because I can see the effect of Him on my life, and on countless lives around the world. I can feel Him inside me, around me, even working through me.

I'm not sure people leaving the faith is an assault on Christianity as much as it is simply showing the danger of building faith on principles instead of relationship. As good and as important as principles are, nothing will ever compare to the vibrant, healthy, biblical relationship that we were all created for with a God who is more real and more alive than many of us realize.

Darren Wilson is the founder of Wanderlust Productions and the creator of various films, including *Finger of God*, *Furious Love*, and *Father of Lights*. Darren's new book, *Finding God in the Bible*, is available in stores everywhere. Visit his website at .