

The 2 Reasons You Should Stop Arguing With Atheists

The group calling itself “American Atheists” is at it again. Last year they paid for billboards on which Santa Claus urged us to “go ahead and skip church!” This year, their billboard claims we will have a “merrier” Christmas if we don’t attend church services.

There are two lessons we can learn from these billboards that will be relevant long after the Christmas season is over.

One: Atheists aren’t smarter than you.

Many atheists insist their intellectual rigor requires them to reject religion. Richard Dawkins and other secularists refer to themselves as “brights.” One atheist T-shirt proudly claims, “If you could reason with religious people, there would be no religious people.”

Tell that to Francis Collins (M.D., Ph.D.), head of the National Institutes of Health and a committed Christian. Or to William Lane Craig, the Christian philosopher whom Richard Dawkins refused to debate at the University of Oxford. Or to Robert George (J.D. from Harvard, Ph.D. from Oxford), who teaches at Princeton and is widely considered America’s most influential conservative Christian thinker. Or to Don Page (Ph.D. in physics, Cal-Tech), an evangelical Christian who worked with Stephen Hawking at Cambridge. Or to Condoleezza Rice, the former Stanford provost and secretary of state who is a minister’s daughter and committed Christian.

Let’s examine the logic inherent in this year’s atheist billboard: you can have a “merrier” Christmas without worshiping Christ. “Christmas” is the shortened version of “Christ’s Mass.” To say you can have a merry Christmas without Christ is like saying you can have a happy birthday without a

birth.

The problem with many atheists and secularists is not that they are too smart for religion, but that they don't understand Christianity. The executive editor of *The New York Times* recently admitted that the New York-based and Washington-based media powerhouses "don't quite get religion" or understand "the role of religion in people's lives."

There's a reason for this that transcends information and education. David said to God, "In your light do we see light" (Ps. 36:9). If I am in the dark, I cannot see what is around me. Paul noted that a person who does not know God personally "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). This fact leads to our second lesson.

Two: We can't argue people into faith.

A relationship with God is like any other relationship: it requires a commitment that transcends the evidence and becomes self-validating. This is true of choosing a college, or getting married, or having children, or accepting a job. In every case, we examine the evidence, but then we must make a commitment that takes us beyond what we can prove and validates itself through experience.

As a result, the best way to show that the Christ of Christmas is real is to demonstrate his reality in our lives. When lost people see the transformation and joy of Jesus in us, they will want what we have.

That's why it is so important that Christians relate to non-Christians in grace, speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). It's easy to denigrate those who reject the Child we worship. But that's the exact wrong thing for us to do. Lost people act like lost people. So did we before we met Jesus. It's up to Christians to act like Christ.

I spoke yesterday at the memorial service of a dear friend who died last week of ALS. His pastor said of him, "If I could preach the gospel the way Rusty lived it, I'd be onto something."

So would we all. {eoa}