

When Skepticism Is Your Religion

In episode 17 of my new series, *Questions With God*, I ask the question, “Why Are Tongues So Controversial?” Honestly, until I started making my two Holy Ghost films, I had no idea this was even a “thing”. Obviously making the kinds of movies that I do tends to lead you into a more “charismatic” crowd, and in those crowds the idea of tongues being controversial is *definitely* not a thing. If anything, you’re the weirdo if you don’t do it, which is why I kept my own inability to speak in tongues a secret for so long—I was getting sick of all the “tongues interventions” that would spring up when people found out.

But when making these episodes about tongues (in both *Adventures With God* and *Questions With God*) it got me thinking about my life before *Finger of God*. My first book is all about my slow journey out of skepticism and into true belief in the supernatural, and in that book, I tried to dig deep not only into the fact that I was a skeptic, but even more as to *why* I was a skeptic. For me, the answer came down to a fundamental admission: I couldn’t afford for these things to be true.

Regardless of what you believe about tongues (it’s not for today; it should only be spoken if there’s an interpreter present; you’re not actually filled with the Spirit if you don’t speak in tongues and so on) for me the topic speaks to a larger, mostly unspoken issue of what we do internally when we don’t agree or understand something being presented to us. When I examine my own past skepticism, I can identify a few things I used to do to protect myself from having to believe what I was hearing or encountering.

The first thing I would do would find something, anything, that I believed to be biblically inaccurate about whatever

someone was telling me, and I'd pounce on that like a drowning man on a life preserver. It wouldn't matter if there was a lot of other biblical precedence for what was being stated, if I found one misstep, I'd make sure it spoiled the whole basket. I held people I disagreed with to an impossibly high standard, completely ignoring their own journey of slowly gaining full understanding and revelation. No, if you're going to present something to me that might upturn my apple cart, you better have all your ducks in a row. I had just enough understanding of the Bible to make me dangerous, and I would employ these theological gymnastics so often that I was convinced I had a rock-solid understanding of what the Bible said about almost anything. Shockingly, it aligned perfectly with the toothless faith I was living with.

Another technique that fueled my skepticism was to simply ignore it. Oh, there's a charismatic speaker coming to the church? Huh, well enjoy yourself. I'm going to watch the game instead. And then when the pastor did the old rope-a-dope and *also* had the guest speaker preaching on Sunday morning so I had to listen to him, I would just employ technique No. 1 (finding one flaw in the presentation) and would then marvel at my gift of discernment.

Finally, if all else failed, and I would be presented with something that was both biblically airtight and that, you know, I actually heard, I had the ultimate defense that could be unleashed with deadly effectiveness. I'd simply say, "Well, that's simply not my personality. I'm just more conservative/introverted/quiet/pick-your-description-that-fit-here." And that would be that. Game over. What's on TV?

The reason I fought so hard for my skepticism was because I knew the consequences if I didn't. Truth has a funny way of drawing a line in the sand that can make you quite uncomfortable sometimes, and I knew that if what I was hearing was true, it would require something from me, and I was going to have to change my whole approach to God, Christianity and

the people around me. Nope. I'm happy right where I am, thank you very much. I engaged with my skepticism more than my faith, and eventually it became a kind of religion of its own.

Typically, we're going to believe what we want to believe, regardless of evidence or sound arguments, because what we believe about a certain issue commands our actions. As a recovering skeptic, perhaps the biggest lesson I've learned from this decade-long journey is that sometimes I just need to chill. I'm a thinker, and I need to process things for a while before I'm ready to commit, not because I'm a fearful person, but because I'm only interested in what's real and true and right. I don't want to waste my time with things that are wrong. The main difference between me now and the old me, and I think between the skeptic and the seeker, is that I no longer use my cognitive abilities as a weapon of defense, but rather as a tool for truth. The difference is subtle, but can mean all the difference between a stunted spiritual life and a life of fulfillment and meaning and actually knowing Jesus as opposed to simply knowing about Him.