

## Should You NOT be a Christian? (Part I)

**1 Corinthians 3:20-21: (NASB) <sup>20</sup>... The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless. <sup>21</sup>So then let no one boast in men...**

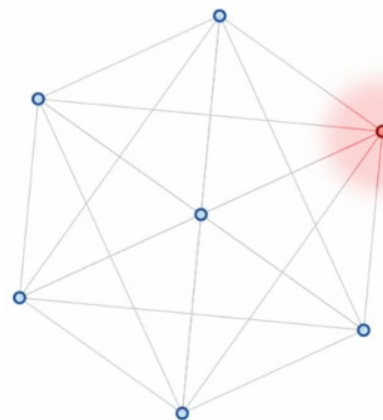
ἄθεος

THE GREEK WORD "ATHEOS,"  
MEANING "WITHOUT GOD."  
THIS WORD - IN ANY OF ITS FORMS -  
APPEARS NOWHERE ELSE IN THE  
NEW TESTAMENT OTHER THAN  
EPHESIANS 2:12

About two months ago, we received an email from a listener - a college student - who was troubled. He is a Christian and had watched a YouTube video entitled, "Why I am no longer a Christian," a 1 1/2-hour, step-by-step presentation of how another young man went from devoted Christian to atheist. It was a well-done, non-inflammatory treatise on why the author now believed Christianity to be just a story. The young man who emailed asked us if we could answer, to which we responded, yes, just give us time. Stay with us for Part I as we go through this very detailed reasoning!

 **Belief in God a "mega-belief," *Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com***

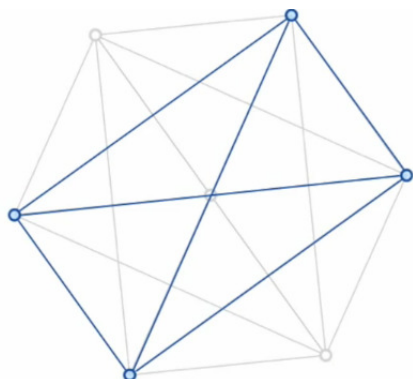
- In the mind of any sophisticated believer, the concept of God is a mega-belief. It's a belief that's held together by many small beliefs, many small experiences that accumulate and form a larger belief. If at any one time one of these beliefs is attacked, a believer can still in their own mind rely on the strength of the other beliefs. It is only when a sufficient number of these beliefs that form the mega-belief are countered that a Christian will really start to question their faith.*



Mega-beliefs are common in many aspects of our lives. Here are some examples: The theory of evolution, global warming, application of human rights (Who gets them? How should they be applied?), political perspectives, medical treatments vs. all natural approaches.

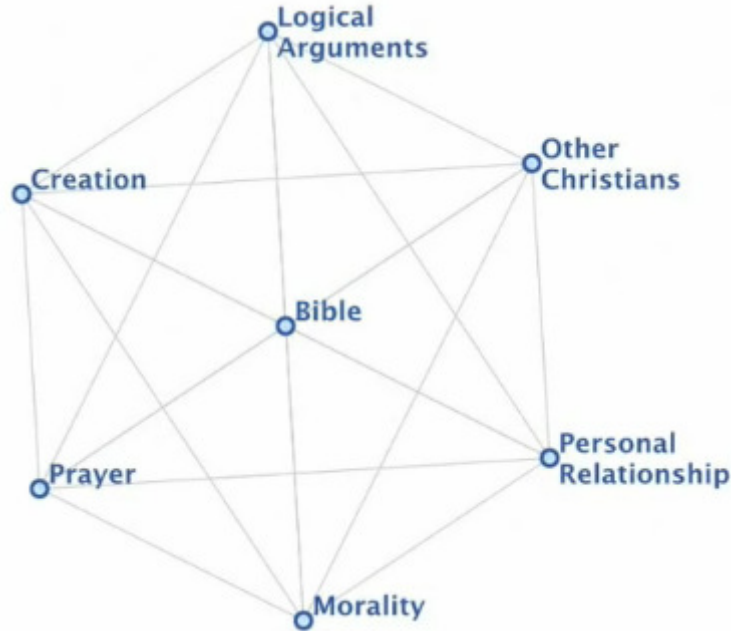
All of these things have their basic tenants subject to wildly varied interpretation. Our lives are built on many mega-belief systems, so Christianity is not set apart from these things.

 **Graceful degradation defined, *Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com***



- Graceful degradation is a concept in network theory where multiple nodes in a network can be knocked out, but the network as a whole can still stand up. For the purpose of continuing my story, I will label these nodes. This is a simplified model of the concept of God, but I think that it covers a sufficient number of different subjects to make my de-conversion convincing.*

The speaker showed a picture showing "graceful degradation" applied to Christianity:



Part I of our program will review two of these topics - Prayer and Morality.

 **Debunking prayer, prayer answers as likely as life odds, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, youtube.com**

- *Often in my own life, I found that the likeliness of a prayer request coming true seemed to be directly proportional to the likeliness of it happening without me praying. To adjust for this, as I got older, I started to ask for things I was more likely to get. For example, instead of asking for God to make me a robot, give me superpowers or send me to the moon, I'd ask for God's help on homework, or how I'm doing with a certain emotion, help for a friend in difficult circumstances. These are all things that I realized were likely to happen anyway, but I thought asking God for help might tip the odds in my favor.*

**First, it seems as though we are to have the correct perspective about our God and about ourselves:**

**Isaiah 57:15:** (NRSV) *For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

There is a greatness to the loftiness of God, and a smallness to the humility of man.



But wait a minute - who says prayer is supposed to be about getting what I want???

**Romans 8:26-28:** (NRSV) <sup>26</sup>*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.* <sup>27</sup>*And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* <sup>28</sup>*We know*

that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

This tells us that 1) sometimes we don't even know what we are supposed to be praying for, and 2) if you aren't getting what you want, it is to work together for your best spiritual interest.

So is getting what I want proof of prayer or is not getting what I want proof of prayer, OR is all of that going to happen anyway so prayer is meaningless?

### Is there a way to "prove" that prayer works?

1 Corinthians 3:1-3: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, <sup>3</sup>for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

Although that set of Scriptures does not talk specifically on prayer, it does demonstrate an important scriptural principle: Spiritual maturity. If you are spiritually immature, you are like an infant, needing continual care and pampering. The Apostle Paul was telling the Corinthians that they needed to grow up. That principle is important to understand as we analyze prayer from a scriptural standpoint.

 **Debunking prayer, God's omniscience cancels intercessory prayers need, Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com**

- *If God already knew everything before it happened and had set all the possible events in the universe in place, there is absolutely nothing I could ask for that He didn't already know about. Further, if He was omniscient, all benevolent, and had a plan for me, then why on earth was I trying to put myself in the driver's seat? What I really needed to be doing was trying to discover His will for my life. If God was omniscient, then He had already given me all the tools I needed to solve whatever problem I had. It was my responsibility to find those tools and His will for how He wanted me to use them.*

We do not believe that God has every detail of our individual lives set out before us. It is not predestined for us to do everything like robots. We have a choice. God respects that and built that into humanity. That is why we are in a world of sin - He allows for the choices of humanity.

The Scriptures are replete with examples of the choices we, as followers of God, can make to continually affirm and re-affirm our faith. We choose!

### God uses our choice:

Joshua 24:15: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

We all serve gods of some kind to whom we give our devotion, respect and service - even atheists and scientists. Although one can't scientifically prove the existence of God, one can't scientifically disprove God. It takes a step of faith one way or another. Where there are laws of nature, we see reason and design.



**Once we choose, then we must apply ourselves to that decision:**

**2 Timothy 2:15-16:** (NASB) <sup>15</sup>Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. <sup>16</sup>But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness...

We have to understand what we believe in. Christianity is not about just going to church on Sunday, nodding and listening.



Can we *prove* that prayer works from a scientific standpoint? No. But what about the Arts? What is art? It adds beauty to the world, but one cannot quantify art in a scientific format. It stirs emotion and drive. Art moves people. Art and prayer are similar in that regard, as a moving force in humanity that changes people but is not quantifiable. A piece of art that we term as "priceless," means it is cannot be quantified. Prayer is a moving part of our inner man but cannot be proved. So instead of proving it, we want to explain it.

 **Debunking prayer, study proves prayer doesn't work, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)**

- *As an atheist, I later discovered an in-depth study on intercessory prayer involving 1,800 patients undergoing heart surgery. The study found no positive effect on the patients who had been prayed for. Even as an atheist, the results surprised me. Surprisingly, the study found that people who knew they were being prayed for actually had more complications after surgery than those who didn't.*

This is saying there was no positive effect from prayer because it did not physically heal the people.



But remember, prayer is not about "what I get," but "what I become." We can say that prayer doesn't work, because there are many times we don't get what we pray for, and we think that what we pray for is "God Approved," so there is no reason to not get it! Apparently even Jesus had the same "no" answer to *his* prayers:

**Matthew 26:37-44:** (KJV) <sup>37</sup>And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. <sup>38</sup>Then saith he unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. <sup>39</sup>And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: **(the stigma of dying as a blasphemer) nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.** <sup>40</sup>And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? **(one period of testing vs. Jesus lifetime)** <sup>41</sup>Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. <sup>42</sup>He went away again **the second time**, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away



from me, except I drink it, **thy will be done.** <sup>43</sup>And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup>And he left them, and went away again, **and prayed the third time, saying the same words.**

So if we put this three-prayer approach of Jesus in the same light as that scientific study, we would say that prayer had no positive effect on Jesus. He prayed three times and what was the result? Torture and death!

Just because we don't get what we ask for does not mean that asking was an exercise in futility. On the contrary, asking and being denied affirms in what direction we must go to get completely in line with God's will.

Prayer is not about getting stuff. Just because we don't get what we ask for doesn't mean prayer is not profitable.

If prayer is not provable, then why not just pray to a jug of milk?

 Debunking prayer, yes-no-wait challenged, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

- *It is often said that God answers prayers in the form of "yes, no and wait." Sometimes the hardest answer to accept is "wait." In their brilliant - if somewhat condescending - video, GII Video demonstrates using a clever example how this can be entirely psychological without God answering any prayers.*

**He is right - prayer CAN be entirely psychological!**

Matthew 7:7-11: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup>Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? <sup>11</sup>If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

With the psychological reality present, this text gets lots of Christians into trouble by misreading. For example, why would God deny me having a better car to use to drive people around? We need to be in line with the will of God and be content in whatever state we are in. Prayer is not about pursuing our own will.

Who should we emulate? Someone thoroughly dedicated to and driven by the will of God. That's where we can find the true value of prayer, as opposed to just the masses of people. Frankly, most of us are way too immature in following the will of God.

 Debunking prayer, praying to a jug of milk works, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

- *To do this, they present the hypothetical in which instead of praying to God, you pray to a jug of milk. The jug of milk answers prayers in the form of Yes - No - Wait. Assume that you pray to the jug of milk to give you \$1,000.00, and they ask you to wait and see what happens. They present three different scenarios:*
- *1. Out of the blue you get a check for \$1,100 from the IRS, and they say, "See? The jug of milk answered your prayer!"*

- 2. *Several weeks later, out of the blue, you get a cost of living raise and that happens to increase your salary by \$1,200. And they say, "See? The jug of milk answered your prayer. You just had to wait!"*
- 3. *Nothing happens for six months, and if you ask them why, they would say, "We have to trust that the jug of milk knows best. Let's be patient."*

There are problems with the "clever" analogy above:

Our jug of milk, just like any other idol that man creates, does not give reasons for answers. It does not set guidelines. It does not provide inspiration and direction. It is not historical or prophetic. It is just a clever delusion to sow earthly doubt about something that is spiritually-based. Prayer works. It changes our lives in dramatic fashion. The greatest answers to prayers have not been about "me," but directions in life that further glorify God Himself.

James 4:3-4: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup>You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

There is futility in asking for things to consume with our own pleasures and lusts. Prayer is not about selfishness. Often - even within Christianity - some teach that prayer is to have everything to make our lives grand and wonderful. The truth is, Jesus wants you to have everything in your life to make it *sacrificial*, if you are following after him.

### Speaking of milk:

Hebrews 5:12-14: (KJV) <sup>12</sup>For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. <sup>13</sup>For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. <sup>14</sup>But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

As mature Christians, we begin to realize that prayer is transforming for our lives. It is not about "getting," it is about "changing," and that is why it is not quantifiable.

### The Apostle Paul's reaction to being told "NO" to his request for help:

2 Corinthians 12:8-10: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. <sup>9</sup>And he has said to me, **my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.** Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

How do you prove the validity of prayer? Certainly not by science or case study. Rather, seek those Christians whose lives are truly built around not only living the will of God, but actually put godliness above every other thing in their lives. Ask them about prayer and its transforming power and influence. What you will find is a life that is truly content, driven and secure - a life that lives and breathes prayer. Is that proof of the reality of the power of prayer? You decide!



Graceful degradation, morality introduction, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

- *God is seen as the source of morality for Christians. Without God, there can be no morals.*

A few weeks ago, we talked about what God wants from us and based it on the two greatest Commandments: Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. A vast majority of cultures throughout all of history have adopted the second commandment, but it seems that the first was forgotten. The Torah (the first five books of the Bible) was the first known written record of these things, and it certainly gives us the sense that morality does come from God...so how does that impact our world?

### First, we acknowledge God as the source:

James 1:17: (NASB) *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*

### Second, we acknowledge why God is the source:

Isaiah 55:8-11: (NRSV) *<sup>8</sup>For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. <sup>9</sup>For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. <sup>10</sup>For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

Scientific theory says we are here by pure chance, by accident. Therefore, there is no intelligent design, so morality must be created.



Debunking Morality as from God, college ethics class expectations, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

- *By the time I was 19 or 20, I felt I had morality pretty much figured out. That all changed when I took a required class in professional ethics as a college student. I thought ethics were extremely important, and I felt that this class would have a valuable influence on other people who took the class. I felt that most people my age didn't have as strong of an ethical basis for the decisions and attitudes in their lives as I did. I hoped that in the process of taking the class, I could possibly set an example for the other people to follow if the opportunity arose.*

He was going into the environment to teach by example and not to learn.

### Third, we focus on emulating the ultimate source of morals:

James 3:13-18: (NASB) *<sup>13</sup>Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup>This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup>And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

There is a danger in avoiding the true source of all that is good, because it is easily corruptible.

#### Fourth, we attempt to comprehend the magnitude of the ultimate source of morals:

**Romans 11:33-36:** (NRSV) <sup>33</sup>O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! <sup>34</sup>For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? <sup>35</sup>Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return? <sup>36</sup>For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

We use God's standard to check our personal interpretation of morality and constantly improve it. We have a standard higher than ours. So, according to Scripture, it seems to be easy to locate the source of our morality. Now the question is, is having God as the source of our morality a good thing or are there flaws in that reasoning?

#### To truly behave ethically, do you have to be a follower of Christ?

 **Debunking morality as from God, ethics defined and objectivity displayed, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, youtube.com**

- *Ethics isn't about telling people how to be good, it's about helping good people make good decisions when the best decision isn't always clear. That statement completely changed my perspective of what the class was about. Something else that affected me was the way that our teacher presented positions that he ultimately ended up disagreeing with. When there were two sides to a dispute, you could never tell which one the teacher ultimately agreed with until the very end, when we all reasoned together to mutually reach what seemed to be the best conclusion.*

*"Ethics isn't about telling people how to be good, it's about helping good people make good decisions when the best decision isn't always clear."* We really like this statement and agree that we need some sort of guideline when the situation is foggy.

#### The Old Testament was very clear as to how to maintain a moral and ethical approach to life:


**Joshua 1:7:** *Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.*

What better way to "help people make good decisions" than to constantly direct them back to the laws of God, from which their highest moral and ethical standards were derived?

**Micah 6:6-8:** (NASB) <sup>6</sup>With what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? <sup>7</sup>Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? <sup>8</sup>He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

As a Christian, we have a source for our ethics that is higher than us. Those who do not believe in God use themselves as the source.



 **Debunking morality as from God, Three assumptions and no clear proof of God, Why I am no Longer a Christian, youtube.com**

- I had always assumed that any intelligent, ethical and open-minded person believed in God. It was clear that my teacher was intelligent, ethical and open-minded, but it wasn't clear whether or not he believed in God. Despite the fact that I couldn't figure out my teacher's personal beliefs, God came up pretty early on in the semester. The teacher made it clear that he believed that no conclusive proof could be made either way for the existence of God.*

But just because someone isn't a Christian does not mean they do not have a sense of morality and ethics! The problem is the vast majority of people without God may not have that same ethical code. Non-Christians who are moral do not take away from Christianity or its principles.

*See "The Universal Moral Code" in the Bonus Material at the end of this Full Edition Rewind.*

All of this being said, there is positive attention given to some non-believers in the Bible.

**A great scriptural example of a moral person who was not Jewish or Christian:**



Luke 7:1-10: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>When he had completed all his discourse in the hearing of the people, he went to Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup>When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking him to come and save the life of his slave. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored him, saying, He is worthy for you to grant this to him; <sup>5</sup>for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue. <sup>6</sup>Now Jesus started on his way with them; and when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself further, for I am not worthy for you to come under my roof; <sup>7</sup>for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup>For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, Go! and he goes, and to another, Come! and he comes, and to my slave, Do this! and he does it. <sup>9</sup>Now when Jesus heard this, he marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following him, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith. <sup>10</sup>When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Jewish elders pleaded with Jesus on behalf of this Gentile, saying he was worthy. He had an appreciation for Israel and put his own efforts into building the synagogue. He was kind and generous, but a Gentile.



**Observations:**

- He was a Roman Centurion who knew about Jesus. He was not Jewish and not a Christian;
- He had a strong relationship with local Jewish leaders and they recommended him to Jesus as worthy;
- Jesus could see a lifetime of efforts;
- Jesus fulfilled the request for healing - to a Gentile - even though Jesus came first for the Jews only; and

- The Centurion displayed great faith and humility - more than Israel had shown.

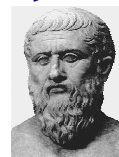
So, if God is The Source,  
does that mean He, being almighty, can change the rules?

 Debunking morality as from God, The Euthyphro Dilemma, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, youtube.com

- Assuming God did exist, my teacher addressed God's relation to ethics in the form of the "Euthyphro Dilemma," which is as follows: Is what is moral commanded by God because it is moral, or is it moral because it is commanded by God?

Basically, is morality higher than God, or can God manipulate morality?

(Source: Wikipedia) The Euthyphro dilemma is found in Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro*, in which Socrates asks Euthyphro, "Is the pious (τὸ ὅσιον) loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?"



The core issue is with rule changing. Those who change the rules will ultimately fall:

Matthew 12:24-28: (NASB) <sup>24</sup>But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons. <sup>25</sup>And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. <sup>26</sup>If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup>If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup>But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Jesus is explaining that if a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand. So if God, therefore, is changing the moral fabric of the way things work, His kingdom could not stand because it would not be firm. Something that contradicts itself could not stand the test of time.



John 8:11: Then Jesus said, neither do I condemn you, go from now on, do not sin. There is a danger in making your professor your god. Humans do fail in their ethics and moral objectives. Christians follow not a human teacher alone, but a God who provides real help to those who ask. 2 Corinthians 13:11: Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another. Live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you.

We don't want to emulate someone who is imperfect but instead want to look towards a higher standard.

 Debunking morality as from God, The Euthyphro Dilemma applied, *Why I am no Longer a Christian*, youtube.com

- The teacher argued that the second possibility was absurd. For example, if things were just moral because God commanded them, then God could command anything and it would become moral. This is called "divine command theory." The problem with this is that God could command murder and child molestation and these things would not only be "good," but morally required. It would make the word "good" meaningless, because there would be no standard by which to judge what is good. There would be no ultimate

*values; it would just be whatever random things God declared were good, and this didn't align with the God that I knew.*

The argument is that obviously morality could not come from God, because God could change the rules of morality. Things that we see as immoral would have to become moral because God said so.

We believe things are moral because God says they are. God commands them. But, we believe God is bound by the laws of morality that He has stated. He has bound himself by those laws and it is impossible for Him to change. The "what if" scenario applies only to the imperfect morality of men.

**The Bible assures us of this in many places, such as:**

**Hebrews 6:13-19:** (NASB) <sup>13</sup>For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, <sup>14</sup>saying, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you. <sup>15</sup>And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. <sup>16</sup>For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. <sup>17</sup>In the same way God, **desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose**, interposed with an oath, <sup>18</sup>so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. <sup>19</sup>This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

God has an unchangeable, unwavering plan. He cannot and will not waiver from it. We have no worries when it comes to God and morality, as He is bound by the laws of justice, wisdom, love and mercy. In dealing with humanity, God has made promise after promise that He will not change those principles.

The Greek gods were filled with emotion, pride, and ego, so this question was valid for Plato and Socrates to discuss.

**James 1:12-18:** (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. <sup>13</sup>Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. <sup>14</sup>But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. <sup>15</sup>Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. <sup>16</sup>Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup>Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the **Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.** <sup>18</sup>In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

There is no shifting in God's plans and purposes for humankind.

But could one say God treated humans differently in the Old Testament than in the New Testament? Did He change? The answer is no. He did not change, but the dispensation, the time changed. The part of the lesson for all of humanity changed.

Take the example of a human father with children. When they are younger, they are taught certain things at a basic level. One does not teach a five-year old what one would teach a 15-year old. One does not debate with a 5-year old what one would debate with a 15-year old. One would treat them differently but in the context of the same end result.

The God of the Old Testament provided a different kind of treatment for a different time of humanity.

**James 3:13-17:** (NASB) <sup>13</sup>*Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup>This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, **unwavering**, without hypocrisy.*

We don't want to put our faith in unstable humanity. We don't make God like man; we keep Him above us. Yes, morality comes from God and that is the most reliable source in the universe!

Those who have "de-converted" have taken pieces and parts of the Gospel message and looked at them with doubts. When you take the whole message of the Scriptures, put it all together and reason through it, you find something solid and that gives us great confidence and great faith.

*Should you NOT be a Christian...?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
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On prayer...

**Praying for guidance - not things:**

**Isaiah 30:19-22:** (NASB) <sup>19</sup>*O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. <sup>20</sup>Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. <sup>21</sup>Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left. <sup>22</sup>And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing, and say to them, "Be gone!"*

**1 Corinthians 10:13:** (NRSV) *No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.*

**God does choose whom He listens to:**

**Proverbs 15:28-29:** (NRSV) <sup>28</sup>*The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil. <sup>29</sup>The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.*

**Is this a text that tells us to pray for physical healing?**

**James 5:16-18:** (NASB) <sup>16</sup>*Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. <sup>17</sup>Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not*



rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. <sup>18</sup>Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

No, rather it is a text that tells us to be healed of our sins and not our sickness - there is a difference. It also qualifies that the answer comes to those who God considers "righteous."

Isaiah 1:18: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Ephesians 1:7: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

**Having opened the door of blessing from above, we now need to keep it opened:**

James 4:7-10: (NRSV) <sup>7</sup>Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Examples of two great followers of God - what did THEY pray for? Personal gain? Personal healing? Personal favors?

**No, they prayed for God's presence with His people as they confess their sins:**

Daniel 9:17-19: (NRSV) <sup>17</sup>Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication, and for your own sake, Lord, let your face shine upon your desolated sanctuary. <sup>18</sup>Incline your ear, O my God, and hear. Open your eyes and look at our desolation and the city that bears your name. We do not present our supplication before you on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of your great mercies. <sup>19</sup>O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and act and do not delay! For your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people bear your name!

Nehemiah 1:4-7: (NRSV) <sup>4</sup>When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup>I said, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments; <sup>6</sup>let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my family have sinned. <sup>7</sup>We have offended you deeply, failing to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses.

**Finally, we need to pray in accordance with God's will:**

James 4:13-17: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit. <sup>14</sup>Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup>Instead, you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that. <sup>16</sup>But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

On morality, here is an interesting "Code" that truly sums up the morality of the God of the Bible:

### The Universal Moral Code

The Universal Moral Code is a list of fundamental moral principles that can be found throughout the world. It was created by Dr. Kent M. Keith in 2003 while writing a book on morality and ethics. The code incorporates basic, universal ideas about how we should live and how we should treat each other. Living these principles can provide each of us with the meaning that comes from living our values and doing what's right.

The code is divided into two complementary sets of statements. The first set consists of negative statements about not doing harm, while the second set consists of positive statements about doing good.

#### DO NO HARM.

Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you.

Do not lie.

Do not steal.

Do not cheat.

Do not falsely accuse others.

Do not commit adultery.

Do not commit incest.

Do not physically or verbally abuse others.

Do not murder.

Do not destroy the natural environment upon which all life depends.

#### DO GOOD.

Do to others what you would like them to do to you.

Be honest and fair.

Be generous.

Be faithful to your family and friends.

Take care of your children when they are young.

Take care of your parents when they are old.

Take care of those who cannot take care of themselves.

Be kind to strangers.

Respect all life.

Protect the natural environment upon which all life depends.

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