

A Christian Atheist

Welcome/Prayer

Before you begin, pray for understanding of the scripture, enlightenment that the Holy Spirit may guide your understanding, discernment that you may see how this lesson applies to you, and courage to surrender those things that hinder your spiritual growth.

Preparation

Consider the premise of the message, “A Christian Atheist,” specifically the Philosophical Atheist versus the Christian Atheist.

- The Philosophical Atheist is one who rationally denies the existence of a deity and does not believe in a supreme being.
- The Christian Atheist is one who believes in God but lives as if God doesn’t exist.

Our focus will be on the latter, where we’ll study Jesus’ parable of the soils to understand more fully what Christian Atheists might demonstrate.

Read aloud the following scripture:

Luke 8:4-8, 11-15 (CEB)

Parable of the soils

⁴When a great crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from one city after another, he spoke to them in a parable: ⁵“A farmer went out to scatter his seed. As he was scattering it, some fell on the path where it was crushed, and the birds in the sky came and ate it. ⁶Other seed fell on rock. As it grew, it dried up because it had no moisture. ⁷Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorns grew with the plants and choked them. ⁸Still other seed landed on good soil. When it grew, it produced one hundred times more grain than was scattered.” As he said this, he called out, “Everyone who has ears should pay attention.”

¹¹“The parable means this: The seed is God’s word. ¹²The seed on the path are those who hear, but then the devil comes and steals the word from their hearts so that they won’t believe and be saved. ¹³The seed on the rock are those who receive the word joyfully when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while but fall away when they are tempted. ¹⁴As for the seed that fell among thorny plants, these are the ones who, as they go about their lives, are choked by the concerns, riches, and pleasures of life, and their fruit never matures. ¹⁵The seed that fell on good soil are those who hear the word and commit themselves to it with a good and upright heart. Through their resolve, they bear fruit.

Break it Down

Christian Atheist #1: “I believe in God, but my life isn’t affected.”

Jesus describes this person as “those who hear, but then the devil comes and steals the word from their hearts so that they won’t believe and be saved.” (v. 12)

1. What are some examples to describe this type of Christian Atheist?
2. Where have you seen this perspective demonstrated in our society today?

Christian Atheist #2: “I believe in God, but my life is lived on my own terms.”

This person is described by Jesus in the subsequent verse 13: “The seed on the rock are those who receive the word joyfully when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while but fall away when they are tempted.”

1. What are some ways in which we depend on ourselves or our own abilities and according to our own terms?
2. Describe a time that you or someone you know “fell away when tempted.” What happened?

Christian Atheist #3: “I believe in God, but my life is consumed with other things.”

According to Jesus’ explanation, this type of Christian Atheist is “...the seed that fell among thorny plants, these are the ones who, as they go about their lives, are choked by the concerns, riches, and pleasures of life, and their fruit never matures.” (v. 14)

1. Share about certain things that tend to consume your life (e.g., concerns, riches, pleasures).
2. What is a recurring challenge you face in your daily routine?
3. What “full-time” responsibilities create in you a “part-time” follower of Christ?

A True Christian: “I believe in God, and my life is centered on Him.”

Recall from verse 15 what Jesus desires us to be: “...those who hear the word and commit themselves to it with a good and upright heart....” God wants us not only to believe in Him, but to commit our hearts and lives completely to Him. When we do this, when we are obedient and *choose* to center our lives on God, then we live the life that God intends.

1. Describe what a life centered on God looks like for you.
2. What would your friends and family members say about your brand of Christianity?

Conclusion

We heard in today’s message that overcoming Christian Atheism is fundamental to our fulfilling our church’s 2020 Vision. As we embark on this new series, let us take an honest look at ourselves and whether our lives are truly centered on God. Then, perhaps, we’ll be able to narrow the gap between *what* we believe and *HOW* we live out that belief...no longer as Christian Atheists, but as authentic Christ followers.

Close in Prayer

Action Items for the Week Ahead

Review the key points of today’s message and the scriptures related thereto. In the week ahead, reflect upon those scriptures, and consider the following:

1. Write down some changes you need to make in order to live what you believe.
2. Start with the small things (Q: How do you eat an elephant? A: One bite at a time.) when you begin making changes.
3. Pray for God to help you “narrow the gap” between what you believe and how you live.
4. Praise Him for His faithfulness.