

# TheForum – Straight answers to straight questions

## Delusions of God: On Good and Evil

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Preacher: Mark Fossey

[ 0 : 00 ]     What is atheism? Atheism is the belief that there is no God, as opposed to agnosticism, which is the belief that, well, I don't know if there's a God.

So atheism, although it's technically not a religion, in a sense it's the opposite of a religion, it's the belief in no God, it still is an assertion. It is still a, if belief is the right word, I don't know, but it's a worldview.

Let me put it that way, a worldview. A worldview is a system of beliefs about the way the universe and the way the world is, how it's come into being, what it is, and then various ways of thinking about the world, my view of the world and how I live, proceed from my worldview.

So the atheist worldview, or the Christian worldview, is that there's a God and there's Jesus Christ and there's a heaven and a hell and a future and these sorts of things. The atheist worldview is that the universe is like a closed room.

Imagine this room is a closed room. There's nothing outside the universe, the physical universe. There is no God, there is no heaven, there is no hell. Everything is physical. Everything is about physical processes.

[ 1 : 13 ]     There was a start, there was a big bang, and there's cause and effect, various things have happened, and we've now, through evolution, etc., now we're humanity today. It's just physical universe, closed system, and cause and effect that has brought up the world the way it is today.

So atheism is a worldview, even if it wouldn't call itself a religion. Of course, many people in this country would call themselves atheists, and many wouldn't quite go that far. And yet, it seems to me that most people in our nation, whether they call themselves atheists or not, pragmatically live like atheists.

That is to say, they live as if there is no God. So they might not say, yep, I would tick the box atheist in the census form, but because they live as if there is no God, they live pragmatically like atheists.

So I would say most people in our nation today are either committed atheists or pragmatic atheists. The idea of these four talks over the next four months is to show that the atheistic worldview doesn't work.

It's not coherent, which is a big thing to do. And if what I say is true, then it should shake the foundations of the beliefs that many people hold dear, and the world and the assumptions we have as a culture.

[ 2 : 34 ]     What I wanted to do is explore the obvious conclusions of a universe with no God. And to that end, I've been reading lots and lots of books written by particularly the new atheists.

So in the last few years, various people have written popular books, and they're called the new atheists. There's four guys that are the new atheists. Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens.

So there's Richard Dawkins. He's probably the most famous of them, and he wrote his book, *The God Delusion*, on which I've based these series of talks, *Delusions of God*. These are the other two books I've particularly interacted with.

Sam Harris is an American, *The End of Faith, Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. And *God is Not Great* by Christopher Hitchens, *The Case Against Religion*. These guys are part of the new atheists.

And there are lots of books written by Christians of different kinds writing back against the new atheists. So there's a really healthy debate going on. What is atheism? Does it stand up? And does it work with Christianity and religion in general?

[ 3 : 37 ] Now, some 20, 30-odd years ago, John Lennon wrote a song called *Imagine*, a very famous song. And he, in this song, imagined a world without religion, much as these men are doing.

Let me just take you the lyrics through this song. Imagine there's no heaven. Okay, this is the atheist view, if you like. It's easy if you try. No hell below us. Above us, only sky.

Imagine all the people living for today. That's the atheist worldview. No God, no heaven, no hell. Okay? Then he says, imagine there's no countries. It's not hard to do. Nothing to kill or die for.

And, of course, no religion too. Imagine all the people living life in peace. Do you see the implications? From an atheistic worldview, if there's no God, and, I guess, no countries, you've got no cause to fight for.

And so, actually, imagine a world without God. It will be peace. Everyone will be at peace with each other. And the ideas of these four talks, I want to do exactly what he's suggesting.

[ 4 : 39 ] I want us to imagine a world without God. But, is it a world of peace? That's my question. Is a world without God peace? And we're going to be doing that today with this idea of good and evil.

That's morality. Right and wrong. And, well, the next three sessions we'll do one on science. Well, then we'll do one on meaning. And then we'll do one on death. So, those are the four talks.

So, let's jump into the first point. And I'll give two points. And then we'll, which will be quite a while. It'll be 15 minutes or so. Then we'll have time for discussion. Then I'll do the third point. And then we'll have more discussion.

So, that's the idea of this session. The first point and the quickest one of this is this atheist assumptions on morality. And you'll be able to follow it through on the inside of your sheet. Let me take you through some of the assumptions of these men, these new atheists, when you read their books.

The first thing is they're very big on morality. Morality is a massive deal. They write a lot about what's right and wrong with a lot of passion and a lot of strength. In fact, they've got views on all sorts of subjects.

[ 5 : 44 ] Christopher Hitchens, particularly. He's written a lot about how the Iraq war was a really good thing. He's even written a whole book on how Mother Teresa is an immoral woman. There's real, real strong views on morality.

And there's a lot of negative immorality referred to in religion. Religion is very immoral. And they're very, very strong on that. The Bible, very immoral.

So that's the first thing, that morality matters. The second thing is that belief in God is a morally oppressive thing. This is what they say. Let me read to you something that Richard Dawkins said. I'll have to just read it to you.

I forgot to put it on the sheet. He said this. The God of the Old Testament, the God of the Bible, is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction. Jealous and proud of it.

I don't even know what some of those words actually mean.

[ 6 : 52 ] But it's very clear that he is very, very negative about the morality of God. And as you read all these books, they are full of quoting bits of the Bible and showing you how awful God is.

And it's very striking, I think, as a Christian, when you read their writing, how they've made no effort to read Christian literature and Christian theology and Christian scholarship.

Their view of the Bible is just, I'll randomly pick out that verse and make it say this, randomly pick it. There's no attempt to understand what the Bible is really trying to say. And there's lots of scholarship they could have read and they've just no attempt to read it whatsoever.

So it's really quite unfair. But that is one of their big assumptions, that believing in God is a morally oppressive... He is a moral tyrant. And believing in him is an oppressive way to be.

Of course, if you read the Philip Pullman books, that's very much part of the... What's the darkness trilogy? What's the film? The Compass? The Golden Compass. Very much about religion being this oppressive thing, you see.

[ 8 : 00 ] He's, again, an atheist. And the third thing... Oh, I did put that correctly, sorry. The third thing is that religion is the source of much evil in the world. And let me just say something about this.

They're very big on the fact that religion is the cause of war. Okay? And that's like that John Lennon thing. If there was a world without God, it would be a world of peace. Sam Harris, one of the new atheist writers, spends a lot of time critiquing the Spanish Inquisition in the Middle Ages.

And he shows... There's a long explanation of how Christian anti-Semitism is what caused Nazism in the 1930s and 40s. Of course, he didn't talk about the Crusades, but he could have done.

There's all sorts of ideas. That religion essentially is about war. Northern Ireland, you know, the Muslim situation in the Middle East. All these sorts of things. There's lots and lots and lots on how evil religion is.

Let me just briefly defend this view for a few moments. Let me say three things about this. Firstly, the first thing is that not all Christians are genuinely Christians.

[ 9 : 07 ] And you can see the three points on the inside of your sheet there on the bottom left. Now, Jesus was very plain that when you have a lot of people that might call themselves Christians, they might say, yeah, I'm a Christian.

That doesn't make them a Christian. It's actually Jesus that decides who is a Christian rather than people who decide who's a Christian. In fact, he had a description for them that there are some people who are wolves in sheep's clothing.

Okay? They dress up as sheep. They look like Christians, like sheep, if you like. But if you were to take the clothes off underneath their wolves, they speak the speak, they act the act, they go to church perhaps, they call themselves Christians, but they're really wolves.

They're not truly Christians. And the way you can decide who is a real Christian and who isn't, he says, is by their moral conduct. You can look at their lives and see if this person is trying to live by Jesus' way, then they're probably a Christian.

But if this person over here is blatantly uninterested, disinterested in the way and what Jesus taught about how you should live, then it shows, obvious by their lives, that they can call themselves a Christian, but they're just not Christians.

[ 10 : 20 ] In which case, the perpetrators of the Spanish Inquisition probably weren't Christians. And you can tell that by the way they acted in the Inquisition, in torturing people and murdering people, because they're blatantly the opposite of what Jesus taught.

Jesus said, love your neighbour, and if your enemy strikes you on one cheek, turn the other cheek and let them strike that as well. If your enemy takes your tunic, then give them your cloak as well.

Not torture them in a prison. That is the opposite of what Christ taught. And so with the Crusades, and so with, you know, all the fighting in Northern Ireland, you can't call yourself a bomber and a terrorist, or a crusader or a rapist or a murderer or a pillager, and then go, oh, and by the way, I'm a Christian.

Because these are utterly inconsistent. The second thing to say is, well, that atheism also causes wars. Richard Dawkins can't see how not believing in God would cause you to have any sort of war.

But of course, in the last century, some 60 million people were slaughtered in various communist regimes. And communist regimes, by definition, are atheist.

[ 11 : 34 ] They're absolutely ideologically atheist. So actually, what the communists did in the last century would make the Northern Ireland situation look like a pub fight. Because they slaughtered millions upon millions of people.

In fact, when you think about it, the two major conflicts over the last 50 years were, I guess at the moment, it's Islam and the West. But what is that conflict about?

It's the cultural secular West against the cultural Islamic Middle East. It's an atheist versus Islamic situation, really. And before Islam, it was the Cold War, which was communist atheists and secular atheists.

It's really, the big wars, the big problems over the last 50, 100 years have been atheist worldview problems, really. What actually causes all these wars is not religion, but different worldviews, different ways of seeing the world.

We think the world's like this. We think the world's like this. And we disagree, and so we have war. So it's not religion that's the problem. It's worldviews that's the problem. And the third thing is that Christianity is ideologically opposed to violence.

[ 12 : 41 ] But of course, atheism isn't. Christians live by the Bible. We have a moral compass in the Bible. And Jesus teaches us how we should live. In regard to violence, in regard to hatred, that is wrong.

That's just ideologically wrong. And any Christians that live like that are living against the teachings of the foundation of Christianity. But what about atheists? When Stalin is putting Christians in concentration camps, or as they are doing in North Korea at the moment, which atheists, what book can they point to that says they're doing something wrong?

We'll come on to this more in a moment. But atheist atrocities, atheists cannot say of atheist atrocities, that's wrong because they've got no objective moral compass by which they can say that is wrong.

Christians do. We've got the Bible. And it's plain. We can say Inquisition, wrong. Crusades, wrong. How do we know? Because Jesus said it here in the Bible. Now, how do you account for what Stalin did?

How do you account for what Mao Zedong and Pol Pot did? And an atheist, I think there's no answer for that, other than I think they're wrong. There's no objective moral compass. So I would say Christianity is ideologically against violence, whereas atheism doesn't have the means to say that.

[ 14 : 00 ] So ironically, I actually think Christianity isn't the cause of all wars, and religion might well be, but worldviews are the problem, and atheism has got a massive problem with violence and war.

Let me move on to the second point, and this is really the most important point of the three. The atheist morality. And let me, before I look at that quote, there are two big problems with atheist morality, and I've put the two on the right-hand page there.

The first one is that atheism has no basis for morality, which I've just alluded to. And secondly, that without God, there's no way of deciding what is right and wrong. Let me explain. First of all, atheism has no basis for morality.

It's just an illusion. See, if there's an atheistic worldview with no God, no heaven or hell, just a physical cosmos of cause and effect, then there is no such thing as good and evil, right and wrong.

There's just physical stuff that we can explain and understand, but it has no intrinsic value or moral meaning. Richard Dawkins says as much. Here's a quote of Richard Dawkins coming from a scientific, atheistic view.

[ 15 : 06 ] The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is at bottom no design, i.e. no God, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.

Okay? So your closed universe just is. There's no ought. There's just stuff that happens, cause and effect. So no one can say anything ought to happen.

It just happens. Okay? So for us to know right and wrong, I can't make it up myself. It needs to come from outside me. But outside me, there is just blind physical forces.

So there is no way of knowing or deciding what is truly right or wrong. Which actually means morality. If I'm an atheist and I have strong moral views, which all of these men do, what I'm doing in having my moral views is I'm having views in something that doesn't truly exist.

It's just an illusion. Morality is an illusion. Let me put it this way. If a star explodes as a supernova and it's blown into a million billion pieces, is that evil?

[ 16 : 18 ] If there's a forest fire and a thousand million trees burn down, is that evil? A man goes into his back garden and there is a massive ant colony.

And he wants to get rid of it because he wants to clear the garden. And so he poisons this thousand million ants in this ant colony. Is that evil? A man takes a disliking to Jews and gases six million of them.

Is that evil? Because under an atheistic view, stuff that happens just happens. It's just cause and effect. It's just one physical process causing another physical process.

It has no intrinsic right or wrong. Michael Ruse, who's an atheist, said as much. Here's what he said.

I think you put it, sorry, you got it on the sheet there. Let me read this quote. I've got it here as well. Considered as a rationally justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory.

[ 17 : 25 ] Okay? I appreciate that when somebody says, love thy neighbor as thyself, they think they're referring above and beyond themselves. Nevertheless, such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction.

And any deepening meaning is illusory. Striking. Because when you read the books by the New Atheists, they are strongly moral. Things are absolutely right and absolutely wrong.

Religion is awful. But really, from an atheistic view, they're wrong. They can't say that because ethics is illusory. Having said that, the next important thing I think to say is that without God, there is no way of deciding what is truly right or truly wrong.

Now, you really see this when you read the different New Atheist authors. Then, if atheism is, morality is an illusion and yet they still have moral views, I consider that a good thing, that they're living inconsistently with their worldview.

But when you actually ask them, okay, right, so you think there's ethics, even though there isn't, how do you come about deciding right from wrong, good from bad? And they scratch their heads and go, okay, let me tell you how right and wrong comes up.

[ 18 : 41 ] And for every atheist book you read about how morality comes about and what is right and wrong, there is a different view. Because they've got no God, because they've got no moral compass, they've got no Bible to say what's right and wrong, put ten atheists in a room and ask them what's right and wrong, you'll get ten different right and wrongs.

Because there's no way of objectively knowing from science what's right and wrong, they've got to come up with it themselves. You see this massively in their writings. Let me give you a couple of examples.

Sam Harris wrote a whole book about how science tells you what's right and wrong. It's called The Moral Landscape. Sorry, we'll come back to that later.

You'll be able to follow this on the sheet on the inside. The Moral Landscape. Let me just tell you how he's... Just as science is objectively true, morals and ethics are objectively true.

So he's big on objective ethics. There's two ways of doing ethics, objective and subjective. Objective is that there is a natural law, the whole universe, there's a definite right and wrong for all people, for all time, in all places.

[ 19 : 51 ] These things are right and these things are wrong. The subjective way of thinking about it is, no, I've come up with what I think is the best idea personally for what's right and wrong. We do this as a culture and what culture says is right and wrong is right and wrong for that time and for that place.

Those are the two different ways. Sam Harris is very much on the objective, the first kind, that there's right and wrong throughout history for all people in all places. And he's very strong on this. His view of how you decide what's right and wrong objectively is that whatever maximises well-being is good and whatever causes suffering is bad.

So if it's good for you, if it causes well-being, that's a morally good thing. And if it causes suffering, it's a morally bad thing, which is very close to a philosophy called utilitarianism, which is something that was developed very much in the Victorian era.

And there's big problems with utilitarianism and there's exactly the same big problems that have been well discussed about utilitarianism. They're the same problems with Sam Harris's idea. First, just very quickly, he says that helping moral good is well-being and moral bad is suffering.

How does he know that? Where did he get that from? What book did he read it in? What God did he get it from? What scientific experiment did he get it from?

[ 21 : 11 ] He's only got it from himself. So actually, if he is the one who decides for everyone what is morally right and morally wrong and it's objective and absolutely certain, well, what's he done?

He's put himself in the place of God, actually. The other big problem with his morality, it's all good and well saying well-being is morally good and suffering is morally bad.

But how do you measure that? I mean, in the real practical world, how do I know if I'm doing something morally good or morally bad? Who decides what's good for my well-being?

Is it my spiritual well-being? My emotional well-being? My physical well-being? Is it having a big house or having a lot of money? Or is it having lots of knowledge? Or what is my well-being?

And why is suffering a bad thing always? Much suffering has caused much good in the world. Much suffering has matured people and helped people. Why is that always morally bad? How do you define or know whether something is good or bad?

[ 22 : 10 ] The classic conundrum that I've heard many times is you've got an island with ten people on it. Nine of them are sadists and one of them is a non-sadist. In his worldview, what is good is that the nine sadists can torture the one non-sadist.

Because there is some suffering for the one, but there's much greater happiness for the nine. And things like that. The problem is there are some things that are right and wrong and well-being and suffering.

You can't measure these things. It doesn't work. It doesn't help. Richard Dawkins, who writes on the cover of Sam Harris' book, *You've Got to Read This, It's Absolutely Brilliant*, has a completely different view of morality, ironically.

And his morality is not about objective. Everything is absolutely right. But much more subjective. He's actually got two theories on morality. Let me quickly explain them. First is he looks at evolution and thinks morality comes from our evolutionary past.

We used to live in small villages. And the reason my genes will be propagated is if I look after them and they look after me, I scratch your back, you scratch mine. If we all help each other in our village, then it's good for my genes.

[ 23 : 19 ] But here we are, 21st century. We live in cities with millions and millions of people. And it doesn't work that way. And so the reason that I'm still altruistic or want to help other people is a throwback to my moral past.

It's a kind of echo of my prehistoric urges. He likens it to sex, actually. These days, we can, in the prehistoric past, the reason I had sexual urges built up in me is for procreation.

But now I don't need to procreate. There's plenty of people around the world. I can use condoms and I can use various forms of sexual ways of stopping babies happening. And yet I've still got that sexual urge.

So they don't work together. They're inconsistent. I've got sexual urges, but I don't need it for evolution anymore. And so with morality. I've got these kind of prehistoric moral urges to be altruistic and helpful to other people.

But I don't need them anymore. They're just a kind of... That's his attempt to explain why we have moral urges about what's right and wrong. Now, I don't know about what you think about this, but it seems to me that most people's moral urges are not altruistic, but the opposite of that.

[ 24 : 31 ] And to be altruistic and kind, you have to go against your moral urges. Because most people's moral urges is about self and looking after one's own, not looking after people around the world. So it doesn't really explain why you want to help people in Africa who are starving, because most people's urges are not that way around.

They're the other way around. And secondly, of course, if our morality is instinctual and we can override it, then why don't we? And where do we know what to override it with? The point is, he has this view of ethics coming from our prehistoric past that we can now override.

And so the way we really live now is... The way he goes on to describe it is what he calls the moral zeitgeist. In our culture, we have a zeitgeist. That is, we have a cultural way of thinking about right and wrong.

Our culture at the moment strongly believes these things are right and these things are wrong. And he illustrates this by... If you're looking at great men of 100 years ago, Darwin, of course, he'll talk about...

These men, they had a different zeitgeist because they came from a different culture. So these men, although they were great men and brilliant men and courageous men, they were much more racist, they were much more in favour of slavery and they were much more derogatory about women.

[ 25 : 48 ] Whereas our moral zeitgeist for today is very different. We've moved on from then. And so actually we get morality from our culture and not from something objective built into the fabric of the universe.

It's a subjective thing. And that's the way it should be. Listen, if that's true, here's the problems of that. So, number one, in 50 years' time, the things that we passionately believe that are right and wrong won't be.

They'll be something else. So what we passionately believe are right and wrong, just aren't. They're not really right or wrong, are they? Secondly, one culture has one moral zeitgeist and another culture has another.

Right now there's a big thing, isn't there, in Iran about this woman they want to stone to death for adultery. The reason this debate has come up is because in Iran, their moral zeitgeist is that adultery should be stoning to death.

But in the West, that's abhorrent. We have two clashing zeitgeists. Which zeitgeist is right? Is it theirs or is it ours? The problem with it explains well how we come up with morality in our world, but it's not right or wrong.

[ 26 : 57 ] It's not truly right or truly wrong. And so it's wrong for us to say to the Iranians, what you're doing is wrong because that's their moral zeitgeist. That's the way they're doing it.

They're absolutely right. They're just following their moral zeitgeist. So subjective morality doesn't work either. Look, the whole point of what I've been trying to do in this long section is to show you two things.

Firstly, that atheistic morality has no basis. It's an illusion. It's a bit like when an atheist says to a Christian, your God is an invisible friend, a Christian can then say to the atheist back, your morality is an invisible friend.

It doesn't really exist. You may be passionate about right and wrong, but where do you get that from? You just made it up. And secondly, that actually when these atheists who do have a morality, which is inconsistent with their worldview, try to come up with what morality really is, they all disagree.

Even these guys who are very bright and write these books disagree with the way they think. Their morality doesn't work. Catherine Hepburn was an actress, and she said this.

[ 28 : 06 ] I'll put the quote on your sheet there, towards the bottom on the right. She said this, I'm an atheist, and that's it. And I believe there's nothing we can know except that we should be kind to each other and do what we can for each other.

And what I've been trying to show you, I think, in this section is that although that's a lovely thing to think, she's got no reason for thinking it. Where did she get that from? And what if other people think differently?

There's no way of knowing. Listen, I've spoken for long enough. Let's have a discussion about that. I've put some discussion questions there on the sheet. You can follow through in discussion one. But if anything has stirred you to chat about anything, feel free to discuss however you feel led.

Those questions are just there to help you, guide you. We'll take 10 or 15 minutes to chat about these things. Shall we just draw stumps down and come back together again, just for this last part, and we can have some more discussion afterwards?

I hope that was helpful. I'd like to finish, and it's on the back of your sheet, with just some thoughts on Christian morality and how it's different. And the big thing I'd like to explain to you is that Christian, well, morality, Christianity, is not really about morality, but about being forgiven for immorality.

[ 29 : 31 ] The reason I put it that way is because I think many people have this general view of Christianity, that it's all about moral rules. If you do enough good, then you get yourself into heaven.



And that the Bible is almost like this massive phone book of thou shalt and thou shalt not. So it's a huge list of rules. And I think that's what many people think of Christianity.

But Christianity, in reality, is the complete opposite of that. Christians define themselves as forgiven sinners. That is, they define themselves as people who have been immoral, and in some form or other, and some worse than others.

But Christians all think of themselves as people who have been immoral, who have come before God on their knees and said, I've been immoral. Please will you forgive me?

Please will you have mercy on me? Christians are just beggars. Immoral beggars. Immoral beggars. Who have asked for forgiveness. So you see, and they've been forgiven by God.

[ 30 : 33 ] So Christians can't be self-righteous. They can't be people who look down their noses at atheists and be holier than thou because they're not. You see? Christians are immoral people who have been forgiven.

That's what I am. And it's only because I've begged God and asked for mercy because I've been immoral. Not because I've been really moral all my life.

That's the reason that I am a Christian and the reasons I'm forgiven. Now the means of forgiveness is the cross where Jesus died. When Jesus died, he kindly, God allowed me to have God's, Jesus' moral life attributed to me and my immoral life attributed to him.

So this is the way I sometimes explain it. Imagine you had the moral CV. Imagine I could have a piece of paper here and it says at the top with your name and it's got a list of all the things you've done in your life.

And some of the things on there, you might be in green, they'd be good things. You know, you help people, you're loving. And a whole bunch of things would be red. Things you've done that are really wrong. You know that you've done it wrong.

[ 31 : 39 ] Some things publicly have been wrong and some things are privately, you know wrong and no one else knows. But imagine another CV over here and it's got Jesus' name on the top of it and it's got a list of Jesus' life.

Now Jesus lived an absolutely morally exemplary life. It's all green. It's all good stuff. So there you are, Mark and Jesus. Kind, loyal, loving, honourable, gentle.

Mark, rude, selfish, a kind word here. Something loving there, arrogant, manipulative. Do you see what I mean? Some green and some red but Jesus, just a list of green. And what happened on the cross is that a swap took place in God's eyes, in his kindness.

So that my name and Jesus' name basically get swapped around, tip-exed out and changed around. So now in God's eyes, God looks at Jesus as if he's been rude, selfish, arrogant, manipulative and a liar.

And God looks at me as if I've lived the perfect life of Jesus. Kind, loving, loyal, honourable. And it's only because of, it's not really true, is it? In a sense. It's a fake. It's God in his kindness swapping Jesus and me.

[ 32 : 45 ] And that's what happened at the cross. So it's not as if Christians are holier than thou, better people. They're just forgiven sinners. We don't look down our noses at anyone because we know we're just as immoral as other people have been.

Let me finish with a thought about why I think atheists really reject God and I actually think there's a moral reason behind it. I'll come back to that in a minute.

I've been trying to explain that Christianity, in my experience, for many years, I've been trying to explain to people what Christianity really is, to many atheists.

And it seems to me the most common reason people reject Christianity is because they can't see themselves as immoral people who need to be forgiven. They can't get themselves on their knees and ask God for forgiveness.

A classic illustration of this happened yesterday. Probably no one saw this and no one cares much about football. But there was a guy who plays for Arsenal yesterday who dived to try and get a penalty and didn't get a penalty.

[ 33 : 48 ] And afterwards, to the public, he said, yep, you're right, I dived and I tried to get a penalty. I held my hands up, I made a mistake. But I'm not the kind of person that does that kind of thing.

See, in his head, he's a guy who doesn't dive to win penalties because he's not that kind of guy. But he dived and did that. And I see this disjuncture with many people I speak to about Christianity.

Yeah, I know I do wrong things, I know I do immoral things, but I'm not an immoral kind of guy. And a Christian is someone who's got over that hurdle. A Christian is someone who goes, yeah, I've done immoral things because I'm an immoral person and I need help, I need forgiveness.

It seems to me, and I wonder if many atheists, the reason they reject God actually is not intellectual. It's not reasons of science or arguments against the existence of God or whatever.

It's not intellectual, but it's moral reasons. It seems to me that many people reject God and become atheists because they don't want to accept God, because they don't want to accept God's moral ways, his ways of being.

[ 35 : 02 ] Aldous Huxley is a famous atheist. He wrote the book Brave New World, you may have heard of, and he's a committed atheist and he put it very honestly like this. It's on your sheet or it's on the screen.

For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essential, essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a system of morality.

He's thinking back in the 60s when this rebellion was going on. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom. We objected to the political and economic system because it was unjust.

The supporters of these systems claim that they in some way embodied the meaning, a Christian meaning they insisted, of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confusing these people and at the same time justifying ourselves in our political and erotic revolt.

We could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever. In other words, the reason that Aldous Huxley says that the reason underlying his atheism and he was a very astute and well-written atheist was because actually he wanted to rebel against the Christian way of political system but even more the moral system and for him it was sexual.

[ 36 : 27 ] Interesting, Bertrand Russell at the same time was another man who strongly wrote against Christianity as an atheist but of course one wonders if the underlying reason was because he wanted to justify the affair that he was having with another woman away from his wife and going off and living with her.

I wonder and I can't say this for certain if many people reject God not for intellectual reasons but for moral reasons. Do you remember that bus campaign that the atheists brought out last year?

There's probably no God now stop worrying and enjoy your life and I think it's a moral thing underneath that you see. You can stop worrying about God's moral injunctions because there is no God and you can just enjoy your life and do whatever you want and I wonder if Dawkins and others the real reason underlying their atheism is not intellectual but moral because if there's no God it means I can do what I want but of course the problem is if there's no God I can do what I want you can do what you want you can do what you want you can do what you want and we've got a whole world of people doing what they want.

Do you remember at the beginning I talked about John Lennon imagining a world without religion and without God and Lenin thought it would be a world of peace and I've tried to show that I think atheist morality is both an illusion and actually we can't agree because everyone must have their own view of morality so if we imagined a world without God I think what we'd find is there'll be a bunch of people living inconsistently with the view that there is no God because they've got strong moral views if people really lived that way if we imagined a world where there really was no God and there really was no morality then all people everywhere can do absolutely what they want a tree burns down a man butchers his wife to death it's just stuff that happens so if you really truly imagine an atheist world without God an amoral world it would be an appalling world I think and secondly if there was a world with atheists who live inconsistently with that who were strongly moral

I think what we'd find is even though they'd been inconsistent with that that they'd all be disagreeing with their morality so what we'd have is a world where these people think this these people think this well actually that's the world we live in today different cultures disagreeing on the way things should be and that's not a world of peace that by definition is a world of aggression and war because of disagreement so I think John Lennon was wrong a world without God doesn't bring peace but a world and this is the controversial way to end I think a world in which everyone submits to the teachings of Jesus that is that genuinely everyone loved their neighbours themselves and if everyone actually did that would be a world of peace so I think if there was a world with a God the God of Jesus Christ and everyone truly submitted to that God then actually I think it would be very much more like the world that John Lennon envisaged than one without the God I'm going to finish there there's some more questions on the second discussion why not take 10 or 15 minutes to think about some of those