

Personal Discipleship



Week 3
Current Challenges to Christianity

Syllabus

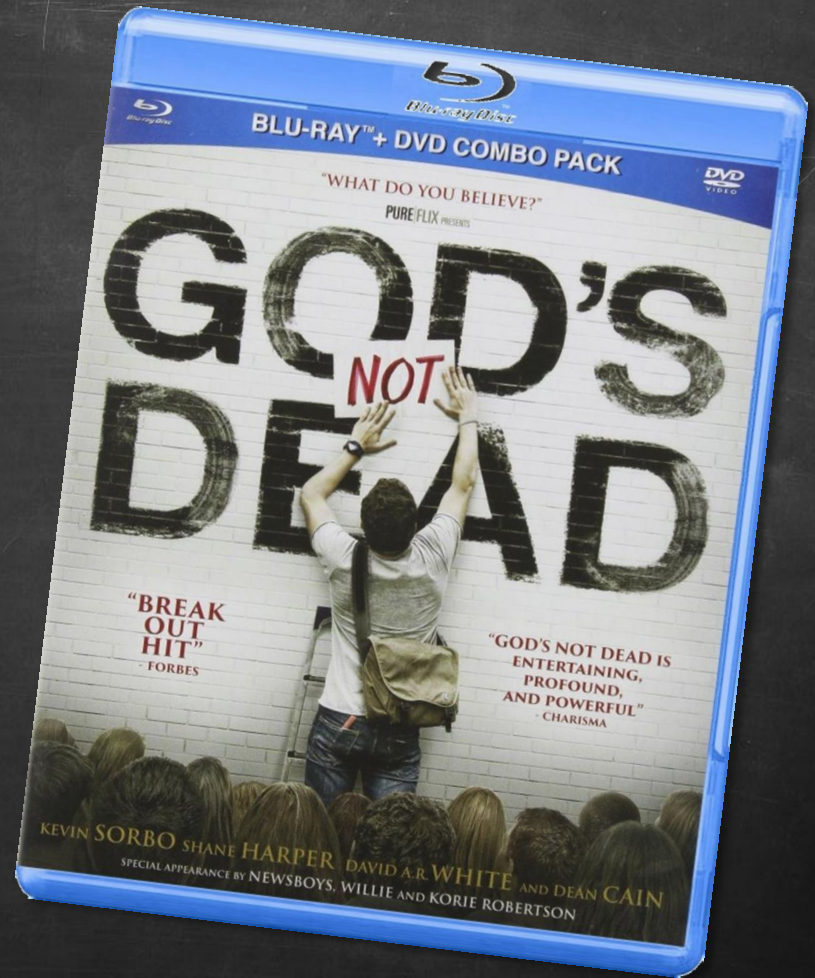
9 Weeks

1. Introduction to Personal Discipleship
2. Keeping It Real
3. Current Challenges to Christianity
4. Apologetic Reasoning
5. Does God Exist?
6. Can We Trust the Bible?
7. Textual Criticism
8. Biblical Inerrancy
9. The Trial of Jesus (Palm Sunday)



Video

We will watch the
main storyline from
God's Not Dead
in class.



Discussion

* Do we live in a 'post-Christian' world?

* How real is this movie?

* Are people really that skeptical?

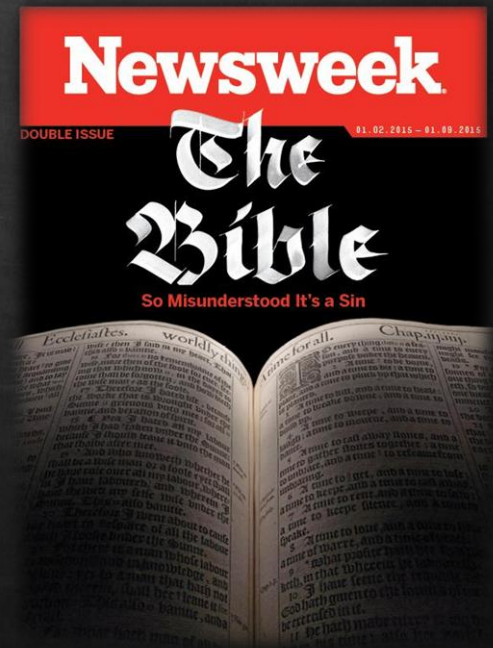


Discussion

* How do we respond to anti-Christian comments?

* How do we respond when we don't know?

* Why don't we know?



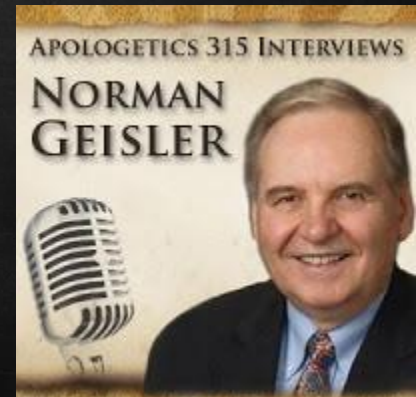
Why Study the Skeptics?

Norman Geisler

“I would encourage reading atheists because when I see the fallacies, the flimsy grounds upon which they base their belief, it encourages me in my own faith. So, I don’t read **Streams in the Desert**, or **Daily Bread** for devotion, I read atheists. Because they’re encouraging Nietzsche, and Freud, and Fromm, and Feuerbach, and Schopenhauer, and all the great atheists. Because as I read them, I strengthen my own faith, I see how to answer the fallacies in their writings, and I’m able to do what the Bible tells me—to destroy arguments and every proud obstacle against the knowledge of God and bring every thought captive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).”
(Apologetics315 Interview)

http://www.amazon.com/Norman-L.-Geisler/e/B000APBJR8/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1

Seminary founder,
apologist, author,
professor, theologian

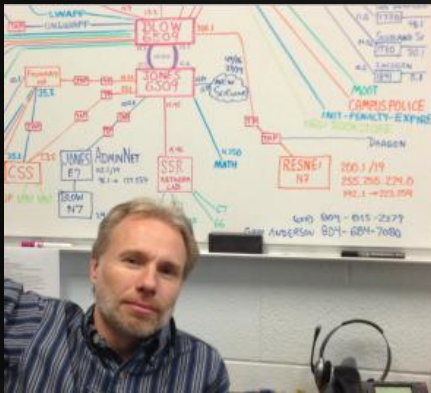


Week 3 Report

Volunteer Question:

Who Are the Most Influential Skeptics Today?

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Clarke Morledge

- ~ Computer Engineer (William 3 Mary)
- ~ MA in Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
- ~ Veracity Blogger
- ~ Small Group Leader, Praise Band Bassist



Who Are Today's Most Influential Skeptics ?

Veracity Post

SharedVeracity.net

Veracity

Sharing the Joy of Personal Discipleship

Who Are the Most Influential Skeptics Today?

February 12, 2015

By Clarke Morledge



What do cultural celebrities like Bill Nye, Richard Dawkins, Neil de Grasse Tyson, Bart Ehrman, and Bill Maher all have in common? In different ways, they represent different forms of skepticism about the Christian faith.

In a recent Sunday School class on "Personal Discipleship," I was asked this question: *Who are the most influential skeptics today?*

How does one go about answering such a question? According to Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, in his magisterial *A Secular Age*, a few hundred years ago it was virtually impossible not to believe in God. But nowadays, the shift is remarkable: for many in 21st century Western culture, it is very easy, almost inescapable, to not believe in God.

Skepticism defines the current cultural mood, something that would have been mostly unthinkable just a few centuries ago.

Who Are Today's Most Influential Skeptics?

Richard Dawkins

- ~ An evolutionary biologist by training (Oxford)
- ~ Prolific writer and speaker (The God Delusion)
- ~ Representative of the so-called "New Atheism"
- ~ Considers Christian belief to be a detriment to society, if not just plain immoral.
- ~ Very vocally opposed to all forms of traditional religion, including Christianity.

"An atheist before Darwin could have said, following Hume: 'I have no explanation for complex biological design. All I know is that God isn't a good explanation, so we must wait and hope that somebody comes up with a better one.' I can't help feeling that such a position, though logically sound, would have left one feeling pretty unsatisfied, and that although atheism might have been logically tenable before (Charles) Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." (Page 6, *The Blind Watchmaker*)

richarddawkins.net

The Hostile
Antagonist



Who Are Today's Most Influential Skeptics?

Bill Nye

- ~ Popular children's educator, "The Science Guy"
- ~ Recent debate with Answers in Genesis president, Ken Ham
- ~ Not rigidly hostile to Christian belief, per se.
- ~ Development of modern science makes belief in God unnecessary in our post-modern age.
- ~ Like cosmologist and physicist Stephen Hawking, sees no problem with Christian belief, just as long as it does not interfere with what is really important: the world of science.

"Your world just becomes fantastically complicated when you don't believe in evolution."

billnye.com

The Exasperated
Agnostic



Who Are Today's Most Influential Skeptics?

Neil deGrasse Tyson

- ~ Intellectual successor to the 20th century cosmologist Carl Sagan.
- ~ Recently hosted remake of Sagan's popular Cosmos series for National Geographic.
- ~ A student of Carl Sagan, mesmerized by his elder's love for science and rational thought.
- ~ Representative of a class of skeptics for whom Christianity is simply irrelevant.
- ~ Science holds the answers and captivates the human imagination in a way that Christian faith does not.



haydenplanetarium.org/tyson/

The Aloof
Secularist



Who Are Today's Most Influential Skeptics?

Bart Ehrman

- ~ Historian, expert in the textual criticism of the Bible.
- ~ Attended Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College.
- ~ Seriously questioned the inerrancy of the Bible in graduate school.
- ~ Abandoned faith when over Christian understanding of why God allows evil and suffering.
- ~ Main argument is that we simply cannot know for certain what God really says, if anything, in the Bible, assuming that there is even a God.
- ~ An effective popularizer of mainstream critical and liberal scholarship.

“We don’t even have copies of the copies of the originals, or copies of the copies of the copies of the originals. What we have are copies made later—much later.” (Misquoting Jesus)

bartdehrman.com

The Disillusioned
Bible Student



Who Are Today's Most Influential Skeptics?

Bill Maher

- ~ Popular comedian and political commentator with his Real Time with Bill Maher television show
- ~ Growing up a Roman Catholic, as a young person Maher came to the conclusion that the Catholic Church was simply telling people what some would say is “a pack of lies.” He is now what could be called a peddler of “Internet atheism.”
- ~ Many “Internet atheists” get their arguments supporting atheism from the Internet, sometimes from very dubious sources, such as the claim made by Christian “mythicists” that Jesus Christ never even existed.
- ~ Maher has infamously propagated these ideas with his movie Religulous.

BillMaher.com

The Internet
Atheist



For Next Week

Volunteer Question:

Who are Christianity's most influential proponents today?



(Looking for names, biographies, areas of specialization, resources)



Upcoming Events...

National Conference on Christian Apologetics

Oct. 16-17, 2015 Charlotte, NC

Evangelical Philosophical Society 67th Annual Meeting

Nov. 17-19, 2015 Atlanta, GA

