



**WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL**  
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**What is an Atheist?**

By Freddy Davis

Sometime back I posted a video on YouTube called "How to Scare an Atheist." The content of the video had to do with the reactions a number of left leaning newscasters had to the election of Mike Johnson as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. It really freaked them out that Johnson is outspoken about his Christian faith, and that he bases his public policy views on Christian values. One of these newscasters actually said the selection of Johnson was a "scary" development. I then went on to explain how everyone bases their values on their worldview beliefs – which are, by default, religious beliefs.

For some technical reason, video didn't post properly. It ended up just being an intro graphic with the title of the video, but no video content. Normally, you would think that no one would respond to something like that. In spite of that, however, an Atheist couldn't resist taking that as an opportunity to criticize me as a Christian – just because of the title. Not one to pass up an opportunity to engage, I jumped on the conversation.

As it turned out, we did have a conversation. Interestingly, though, it didn't really end up dealing with the topic of the video. It turned out to be a discussion about the beliefs of Atheism. Since this subject is one that represents a very common theme, I thought it would be something useful for any Christian who ever has occasion to interact with an Atheist.

Whenever I talk to an Atheist, I, at some point, generally end up having to explain that Atheism is

a religious point of view. Most Atheists rebel at that thought, and it is not unusual for them to respond by claiming they don't believe anything. They often claim that Atheism is not a belief, but is a "lack" of belief. Then, using that assertion, they attempt to put me on the defensive. That is what happened here. Perhaps you have had a similar experience. The following recounts that discussion.

**[Note: This conversation is recorded below essentially as it was originally written. I have slightly altered the other person's identifier, but have left all punctuation, grammar, and spelling as it was written – even if there were errors.]**

**curious**

Four and a half minutes of silence is supposed to scare an atheist like myself?

**Freddy Davis**

curious Hmm. Seems that one didn't record.

**curious**

freddydavis Fair enough. But may I ask, why you felt the need to make this video in the first place? Also. Do you even know what an atheist is?

**Freddy Davis**

curious Of course I know what an Atheist is. It is a topic I write about a lot as I compare atheistic beliefs to Christian beliefs. Feel free to check out our ministry website at [www.marketfaith.org](http://www.marketfaith.org).

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This was actually a video sharing the reactions a number of left leaning newscasters had to the election of Mike Johnson as speaker of the house. Their comments were totally over the top. The reason for their comments had completely to do with the fact that he is willing to express his Christian beliefs in public. That fact obviously scared these people to death.

#### curious

freddydavis When you say stuff like how you compared atheist beliefs to christian ones tells me that you do not know what an atheist is. But I'll grand you the benefit of the doubt. I'm an atheist, kindly tell me what my beliefs are.

#### Freddy Davis

curious You are making me wonder if you know what an Atheist is. Many people who claim to be Atheists attempt to express their faith in negative terms by saying "I don't believe in God - trying to emphasize that "not believing something is not a belief." But that doesn't tell you what Atheists believe, only what they don't believe. In order to get at the actual beliefs you have to express what Atheists "do" believe.

Atheism is a belief system expression of a naturalistic worldview. Naturalism is a worldview category that asserts that the natural universe, operating by natural laws, is all that exists. There are numerous belief systems that are expressions of Naturalism, one of which is Atheism. It begins with the core essential beliefs of Naturalism, then has its own unique personality in other areas.

The emphasis of Atheism, specifically, is the positive assertion that God does not exist.

Is that sufficient for you? How do you characterize it for yourself?

#### curious

freddydavis Atheism is only a position on a single issue. And that is that an atheist does not believe in the existence of any gods. It's not the positive assertion that there are no gods. Everything else you've tried to bootstrap on has nothing to do with atheism. Atheism is not a worldview, it does not require faith, it makes no claims.

#### Freddy Davis

curious You are mistaken on several fronts.

"A" from the Greek meaning no or not

"theos" from the Greek meaning God

The word itself is an assertion that there is no God. Your attempt at an explanation is a difference without a distinction.

Atheism is not a worldview, it is a belief system expression of a naturalistic worldview.

So you think Atheism is not a faith? Do you recognize it as a belief or is it nothing? If it is nothing then what are you even talking about? What do you base that belief on? Do you have some science you want to show me? Your explanation does not make any logical sense.

#### curious

freddydavis You do know that the meaning of words changes over time do you? It matters not what it meant in the past, since it does not apply to atheists today so spare me the semantics.

When i told you that I was an atheist I've only told you what I do not believe. Because that is all you should take

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away from it when someone tells you that he or she is an atheist. If you want to know what I do believe you are welcome to ask however.

## Freddy Davis

curious You are welcome to make up your own definitions if you want, but if everyone is doing that, communication is impossible. I explained to you what Atheism is. If you have some other definition, then it is very possible that you are not an Atheist after all, but are something else (regardless of what you call yourself). There are numerous naturalistic belief systems out there. Whatever it is you believe, it contains positive beliefs that can be identified and analyzed.

So if you want to tell me what you "do" believe, I will be happy to hear it.

## curious

freddydavis I am not making up my own definitions and I am very much an atheist. Atheism is only the lack of a belief any gods. Nothing more! There are atheist religions such as Buddhism and Taoism that do not require he belief in deities for example. Atheists can be new-agers and believe in all kinds of supernatural woo. So no! It's not just another form of naturalism and it is not a belief system whatsoever.

Man how monumentally arrogant do you have to be to tell an actual atheist that he's not an atheist!?!?

## Freddy Davis

curious You said you would tell me your specific beliefs if I asked, and I did. So far you have not done that.

The definition you gave is rather meaningless. I don't believe in unicorns, but that says absolutely nothing about what I actually do believe. Whether you realize it or not, your

Atheism does have a positive way of being expressed. You don't believe "nothing," you believe "something."

The pantheistic religions you have mentioned do not believe in a personal god, you are right. So if we need to make that distinction for you to get on with what you believe, then okay. However, they do believe in a transcendent reality that distinguishes it from naturalistic atheism, which is what we have been dealing with this entire conversation. Your straw man is not contributing to your argument. Now, back to what we were talking about.

So, are you saying you believe in some form of Pantheistic Monism, or is that just another subterfuge for avoiding the issue?

## curious

freddydavis Nope Atheism does not have a positive way of being expressed. And saying that atheism is a belief is like saying that bald is a hair colour. I really wish we could get over this hurdle but you seem unwilling for some reason. If you are going to talk to other atheists like myself you'll hit the same brick wall as with me.

Before we move on I must also mention that your discription of naturalism is very limited and only applies to philosophical naturalism. You seem to have completely disregarded methodological naturalism. Which would be the recognition that the natural world is all we have to research until someone can demonstrate otherwise.

Anyway I promised I would tell you what I do believe, well lots of things actually.

I'm a sceptic first and foremost. My atheism came as a direct result of my scepticism you might say.

I've never believed in any gods and I've been an atheist for as long as I can remember. The first time I came into contact with religion I was well into my teens and by then the whole idea of a god just seemed absurd to me. And well now many years later I have yet to hear a convincing argument for the existence of a god.

I'm a secular humanist. I don't believe that humans are inherently good or evil. Nor do I think that humans are superior to nature and other living organisms. I believe that our morality for a lack of a better word stems from the fact that we are a social species and that getting along is key to our survival.

Well there's the bare bones of it I suppose. Of course there's much more but I'm painting a scale model which I would like to get back to.

### **Freddy Davis**

curious Frankly, I don't care if you disagree with my definition of Atheism. If you want to limit yourself that way, then have at it. That said, Atheism and Skepticism are distinctly identifiable naturalistic belief systems. Secular Humanism is another one (and there are still others). Your hair color illustration represents such a simplified understanding of the concept of Atheism that it is useless when dealing with the kind of depth of this topic we are dealing with now.

What you are seemingly not familiar with is the very concept of worldview. A worldview is a foundational set of beliefs that is outwardly expressed by numerous belief systems. Every worldview represents its own unique understanding of reality, and that approach to reality can be expressed by various outward expressions. Every expression is based on faith, so every one is a religious point of view.

Many Naturalists don't like the idea of being identified that way because they consider themselves non-religious. That is not true, however. Every worldview is based on faith in a set of assumptions that have no empirical basis and must be believed by faith. The various expressions of Naturalism are considered by some not as a religious expressions, but as a philosophy. That said, there is no distinction. All must be believed by faith. Each of the naturalistic belief systems can, in some ways, be considered as different denominations of a particular religion.

Your definition of Naturalism is also lacking. Methodological naturalism is just a fancy way of talking about empirical science. That is certainly not what we have been discussing here. Christians also are firm believers in methodological naturalism. We just also believe there is an aspect of reality that exists beyond the natural universe that science is unable to deal with. What we are dealing with in our discussion is, specifically, philosophical naturalism (commonly referred to by the word Naturalism).

Your description of your atheistic faith is rather unremarkable (not meant as a slur). Your story is one I have heard many times. Just as a side note, you have also defined "religion" in a relatively narrow way - seemingly relegating it to beliefs that have some kind of organizational structure (though, interestingly Secular Humanism has organized itself as a church). But a religious belief is any belief that has to be believed by faith, and naturalistic belief systems firmly fit into that category.

As for a convincing argument for the existence of God, what would that take? Are you going to reject out of hand any belief that doesn't correspond to your faith in Naturalism, or are you willing to judge each worldview system based on its own understanding of reality? It is rather arrogant to think that you can judge the beliefs of one worldview system based on the beliefs of another.

As for your beliefs about living organisms, that is pretty straightforward naturalistic belief. If the natural universe operating by natural laws, is all that you believe exists, then certainly no life form can be considered morally any different than any other, and the ultimate one can hope for in this life is nothing more than survival and personal fulfillment. There can be nothing more. In fact, nothing can even be considered objectively moral or immoral since there is no such thing as objective morality. Morality has to be determined by societal consensus or imposed by raw power (too often it is the latter in places dominated by a naturalistic worldview).

I personally think that is a very sad outlook on life and, based on my own personal experience know that there is so much more, but based on naturalistic beliefs, there is no other possibility.

Well, don't let me interrupt your painting too much. You should get the most personal satisfaction out of it that you possibly can.

At that point, curious didn't respond back – a rather common occurrence when the other person comes to a place where they are not able to further justify their own beliefs. I think his scale model was calling.

My reason for posting this conversation is two-fold.

First, I want this to be a learning experience for my fellow Christians. The beliefs of Atheists like curious are not at all unusual. If you have friends or acquaintances who are Atheists, this is very likely exactly the way they think about their faith.

My second reason is that I want to provide you with some knowledge that can help you have confidence as you attempt to share Christ with people who adhere to this faith. Too many Christians don't have the confidence to do that.

A person does not have to be an academic in order to share the gospel. However, in our current pluralistic society where there are people from so many different faiths, we do need to have a solid grasp of worldview concepts. This is the knowledge base we need in order to be able to communicate in ways that those people will understand.

Think about the conversation above. Curious viewed reality in a way that prevented him from even being willing to listen to what I had to say. He didn't think he even had a religious faith. With that as a starting point, I would be required to prove to him that Christianity is true using his beliefs (which even he didn't understand). That is virtually impossible. We had to establish a common understanding of the very concept of faith before the gospel message could even possibly make sense to him.

The conversation above was with an Atheist. But the same kind of problem also exists when dealing with people from other worldview categories. Thus, it is essential these days to understand worldview concepts in order to effectively share the gospel.

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