

## **Bad Arguments Against Religion**

It is axiomatic that otherwise intelligent people—doctors, lawyers, professors, academics of all stripes—make fundamental mistakes in thinking when it comes to spiritual things. In this workshop, Greg Koukl will examine some of those popular missteps—for example, claiming there is no truth, confusing faith with wishing, arguing that evil is good evidence against God, assuming science has disproved religion, attacking the believer instead of his belief, etc.—and shows that none of these offers safe harbor for critics.

**Greg Koukl** is the founder and President of Stand to Reason, an organisation that trains Christians to think more clearly about their faith and to make an even-handed, incisive, yet gracious defense for classical Christianity and classical Christian values in the public square. He received his Masters in Philosophy of Religion and Ethics at Talbot School of Theology, graduating with high honors, and his Masters in Christian Apologetics from Simon Greenleaf University. He is an adjunct professor in Christian apologetics at Biola University. He is the author of *Tactics—A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* with Francis J. Beckwith, and *Precious Unborn Human Persons*. He has hosted his own radio talk show for over 20 years advocating clear-thinking Christianity and defending the Christian worldview.

### **I. Introduction: Smart People, Bad Thinking**

A. Some of the most intelligent people make mistakes in thinking when it comes to spiritual things.

B. I want to challenge some objections that some have thought are sufficient to dismiss the claims of Jesus of Nazareth.

C. We cannot allow critics to be comfortable rejecting Christianity for bad reasons.

### **II. Mistake #1: Claiming There Is No Truth**

#### **A. This view is known as postmodernism: a community-based relativism**

1. Postmodernists reject that anyone can know anything about the “real” world.

2. There is no truth in the sense that most of us use the word: an accurate understanding of the way the world is.

3. All “truth”—all reality, including all values—are relative to one’s linguistic community which constructs reality for us.
  - a. Language creates reality; it is reality.
4. There are, therefore, many accounts of reality (many “stories”), and each is equally and actually true, for those who believe it. It’s their truth.
5. You can see how this would undermine Christianity.

**B. “There is no truth.” “Really? Is that true?”**

**1. Let’s face it: We are all truth seekers by nature.**

- a. Each day in thousands of ways we are observing, testing, assessing, to determine one thing: truth.
- b. Our lives depend on it.
- c. This is why we fault ignorance.

**2. The claim “There is no truth” says that all such attempts are fruitless. There’s nothing to discover.**

- a. This is self-evidently false.

**b. If there are claims about the world that are accurate, then there is truth.**

### **III. Mistake #2: Dismissing Religion as a Leap of Faith**

#### **B. “Faith” is a deeply misunderstood word – by Christians and non-Christians.**

##### **1. I want to suggest a solution: Get rid of the word “faith.”**

2. It no longer captures the biblical meaning of the Greek word, *pistis*.

a. When you say “faith,” people add the words “blind” or “leap of.”

b. This is not what the Bible has in mind.

##### **3. Instead, use the word “trust.”**

a. Biblical faith—*pistis*—is trust, and trust must be earned.

#### **B. The biblical faith is grounded in evidence and reason leading us to knowledge.**

1. Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction (or evidence) of things not seen.”

2. This is a consistent theme throughout the Bible.

God (Exodus 7:17): “...and you shall know...”

**What was the ultimate result?** “And when Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses” (Exodus 14:31).

### **IV. Mistake #3: Using the Existence of Evil as Evidence against God**

**A. As if all they have to do is utter this statement and people feel fully justified in their unbelief: "If God is really good, how could He allow all the evil in the world?"**

**B. Ironically, proving that there is evil in the world is the key to defeating this objection.**

1. Core concept: What is evil?

2. First, evil must be real for this objection to have any meaning.

3. Second, evil must be measured against an objective standard. But God is the only reasonable objective standard for good and evil.

4. **So the problem of evil exists only if a personal, moral God exists.**

Therefore, you cannot even debate the issue of evil if there is no God. The atheist has no logical standard to raise the objection of the problem of evil.

#### **V. Mistake #4: Attacking the Believer Instead of His Belief**

A. Christianity is what the Bible teaches, not what individual Christians do.

B. So the objector has to contend with what Jesus said. Keep pointing back to what the Bible teaches.

#### **VI. Conclusion: Why Intelligent People Make Foolish Mistakes in Thinking**

A. The reason so many intelligent people reject Christianity is the same reason so many unintelligent people reject Christianity...

It has nothing to do with intelligence.

Rather, Christianity makes too big of a moral and ethical demand on people.

B. The biggest problem with the problem of evil is that if we were honest, we'd realize that we are the biggest part of the problem—sin.

Eternity is an awfully expensive price to pay for the short-lived pleasures of pride.