



I was an Atheist

By Jeff Reich

When I was a kid, I was an atheist. It is a long story as to why, but I remained that way until I was around 17 years old. I had a special disdain for Christians, and I remember, on more than one occasion, mocking them. There was even one time, after a disappointing experience with some Christian neighbors, I stood in my parents' front yard yelling, "I do not believe You exist!" while waving my fist toward heaven in a gesture toward God.

From the time I was 10 years old, I really wanted to be a scientist. By the time I was 12 I carried around an old college-level chemistry book, which my parents started calling my "Bible." I thought I had my life all planned out. When I grew up, I would be a chemist, most likely working at some pharmaceutical company in New York City. I would be dressed in a nice wool sweater, sport wire-rimmed glasses, and drive a BMW. But things did not turn out the way I imagined they would. And, by the way, atheists do not believe in miracles or supernatural forces, as everything can be "explained" by science.



SUPERNATURAL EXPERIENCES

One day my older brother came home with an old book he claimed came from an elderly man who said he was a Warlock (male witch). I did not believe in witches, ghosts, spirits, gods or a devil. To me the old book was a joke. But just for fun, I tried one of the ceremonies found within its pages which was how to summon a spirit guide.

After I performed the ceremony, I waited with bated breath thinking that just maybe a spirit would appear! But nothing happened, so I laughed and thought to myself, "What a joke." But shortly after that ceremony, very frightening things began to happen. I could not shake the feeling that there were forces at work that were not simply my imagination. My brother, too, started telling me about things that were happening to him since we had begun dabbling with the occult. We were both scared.

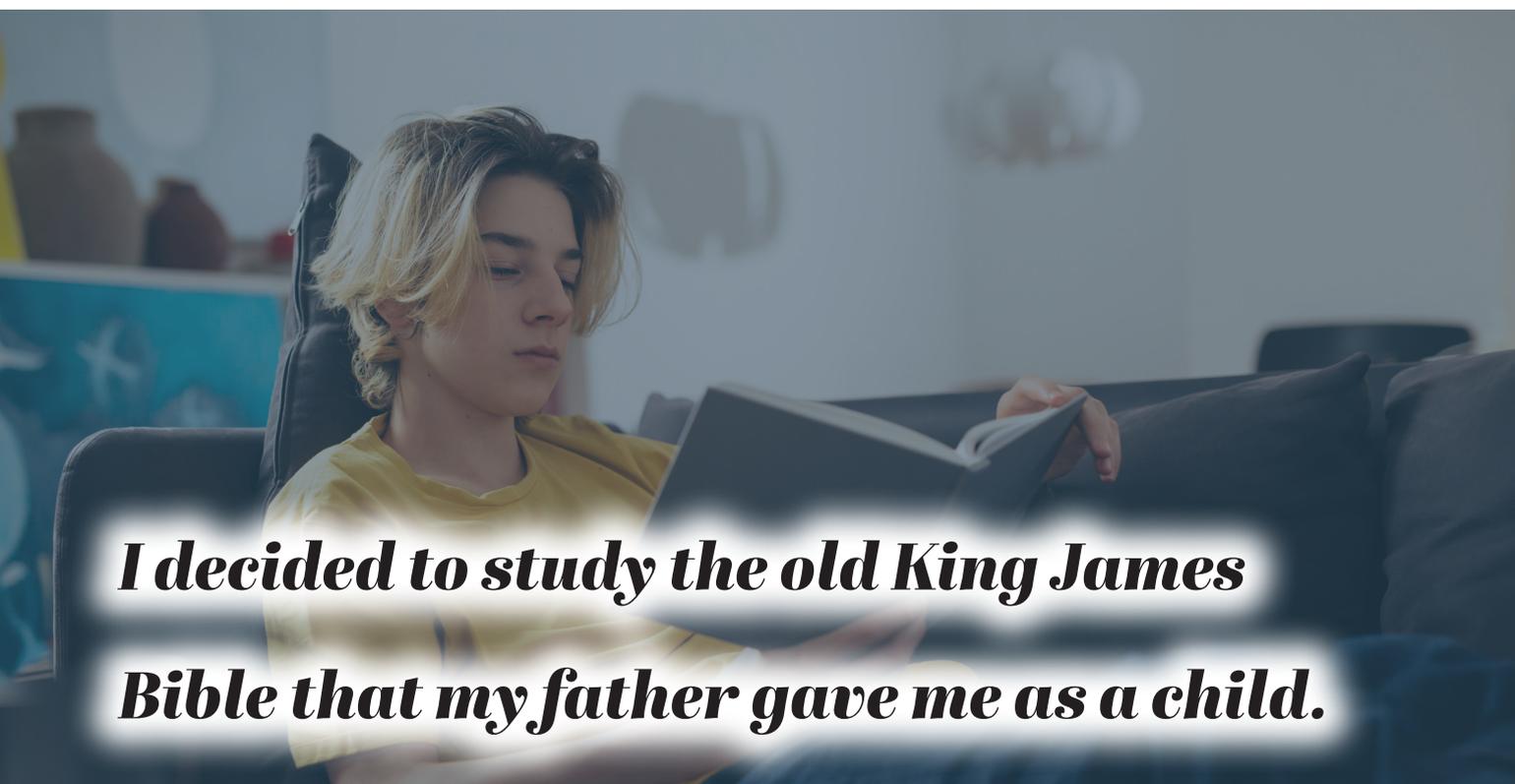
As a result of these ongoing harassments, I could no longer deny the existence of a spiritual dimension. As a young teenager with no biblical background, I reasoned this way: "There are supernatural forces out there, good and bad, and they are contending for the minds and souls of men." It was almost a Star Wars view of the supernatural. It suddenly occurred to me that if there are

evil spirits, which I supposed were harassing us, then there also had to be good spirits, and even God.

So what does an atheist do when confronted by supernatural forces? My brother started exploring Christianity, but I was resistant to that. My quest took me in a different direction — Eastern Mysticism. I explored "I Ching," Kundalini yoga, and Zen Buddhism. After a year and a half of searching, I decided to study the old King James Bible that my father gave me as a child. And although I felt some reluctance, I ended up becoming an Adventist (my testimony can be found on *Laymen Ministries* YouTube Channel, a series entitled *Spiritual Journeys*, Part 1).

THE "NO GOD" DILEMMA

Some people are bent on trying to convince others that there is no God and that those who profess "Christian faith" (or any religion) are dumb, ignorant, and deny science. But one thing they can never take from me is my experiences with God. The Bible tells us "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1. God gives us "evidence"! When my wife and I were starting out in marriage, and as fledgling Christians, I was in between jobs and my wife was doing part-time home health care for the elderly. We did not have money to pay rent, which was



I decided to study the old King James Bible that my father gave me as a child.

due at the end of the week. We decided to pray together.

That same day there was a knock on the door. An elderly man named Harold Addy, whom my wife did home health care for, stood there. "I have something I want to give you," he said with a smile as he handed us an envelope. "I was impressed you needed this," he explained and then shared how much he appreciated Christy's taking time to visit with him when she cleaned his house.

The envelope had our rent money - right down to the penny. This might seem like a simple coincidence, yet to us it was a miracle - one that an atheist can't explain. It was just one of hundreds of experiences that God performed throughout the following years, letting us know, "Yes, I am here".

Don't let people rob you of what God has done for you. If they should succeed in removing Him from your life, what do they have to offer in His place?

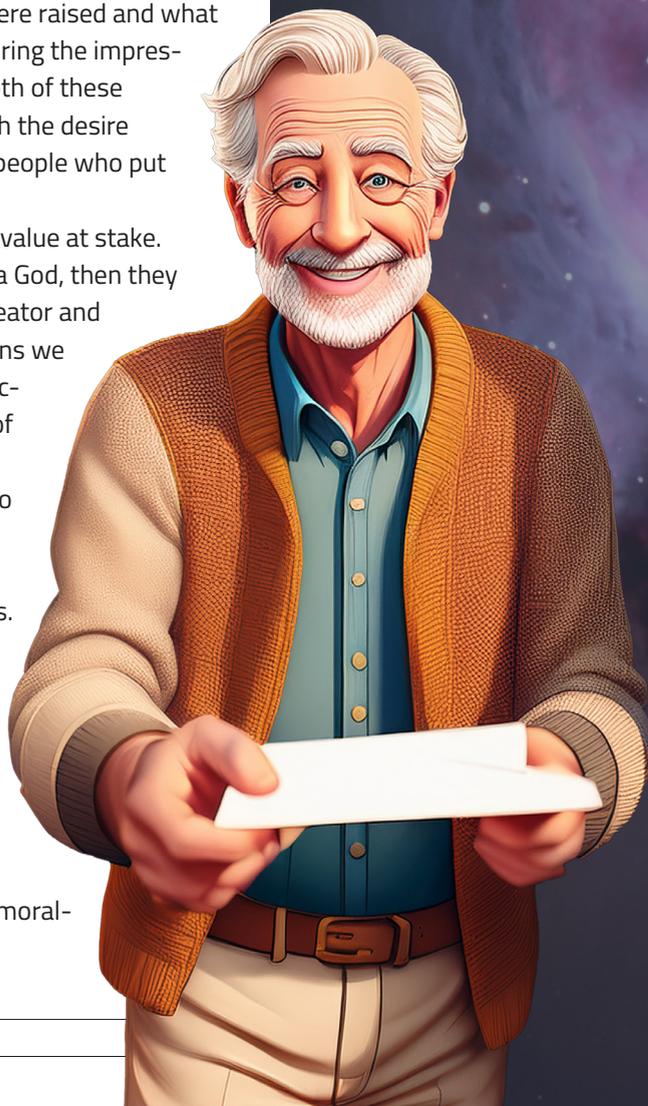
WHY AN ATHEIST?

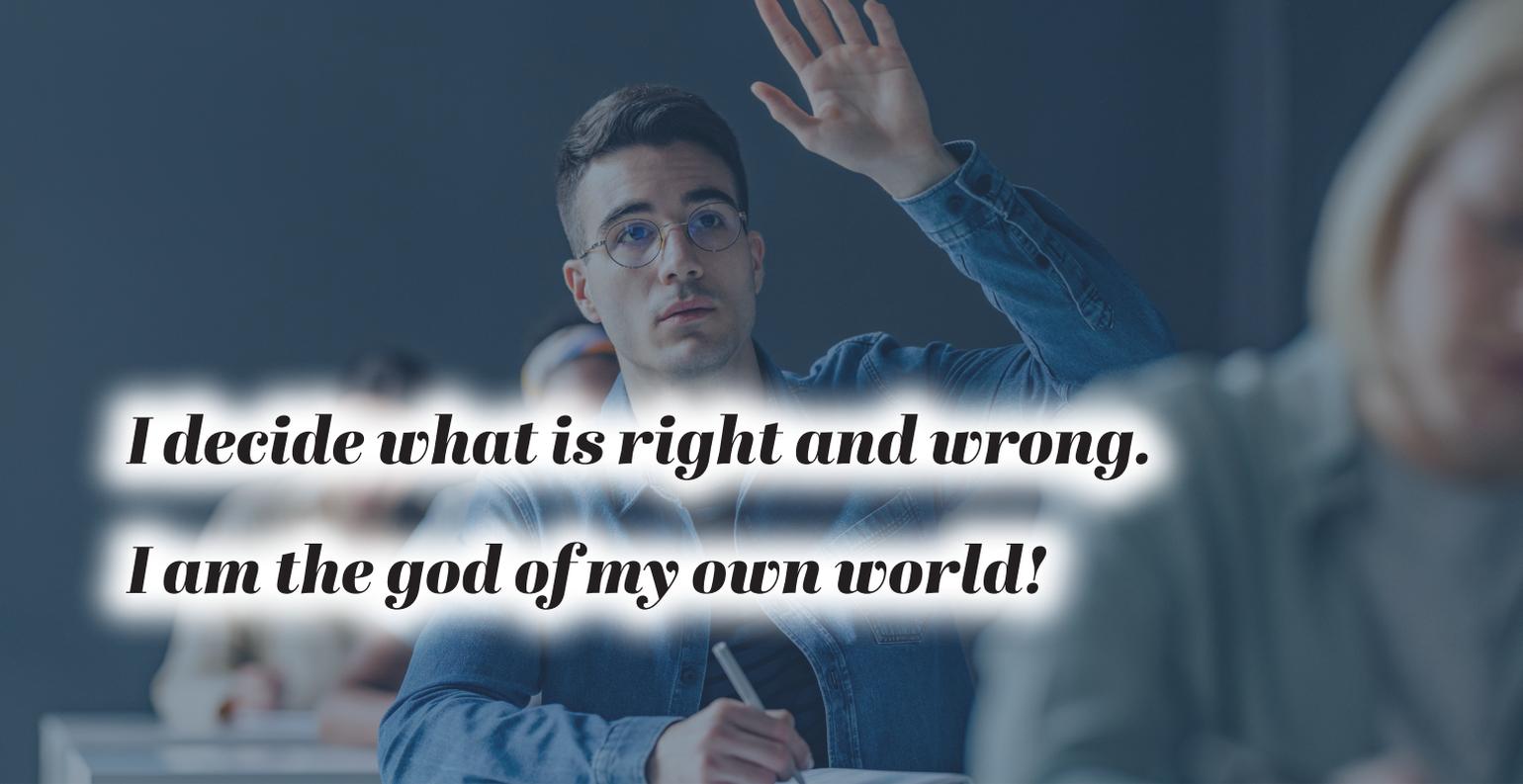
There are many reasons why people choose to be atheists as opposed to believing in God. It could be something as simple as how they were raised and what influences a person is exposed to during the impressionable years. I can identify with both of these reasons. Sometimes it has to do with the desire to appear more intelligent than the people who put their trust in "fairy tales."

But I think there is a deeper core value at stake. If people acknowledge that there is a God, then they must admit that He is indeed the Creator and we are simply the created. This means we must humble ourselves to God, be accountable to Him and His standard of morality.

Without God, a person can hold to his or her own standard of right and wrong. Let's face it - many do not want to be told how to live their lives. They want to decide for themselves what is moral or immoral. Even supposed religious people have, under the pretense of religion, set up their own standard of morality. But when people deviate from the principles found in God's Ten Commandments, His great standard for morality, the worst kind of evil happens.

***Don't let people rob
you of what God has
done for you. If they
should succeed in
removing Him from
your life, what do
they have to offer in
His place?***





I decide what is right and wrong.

I am the god of my own world!

I AM MY OWN GOD

On the first day of school, a college class gathered. The professor, a middle-aged man, got the attention of the whole class. He announced his name, and as part of an introduction, he also told the students that he was a Christian and that he wanted them to know this.

A cocky young student raised his hand. "Yes?" the teacher responded.

"I am an atheist," the student defiantly stated, "and I just want to let everyone here know that as well!"

"Well that's interesting," the teacher replied. "I would like to ask you one question: How do you decide what is right or wrong? How do you determine what is moral?"

"I decide what is right and wrong. I am the god of my own world!" the student answered without hesitation.

"I just want to let you know that when school gets out, I am going to find your car and smash out all the windows with a baseball bat!" the teacher said very seriously.

"You can't do that!" the student exclaimed with a shocked look on his face.

"Sure I can," the teacher explained, "I am the god of my own world, and I do not like you or your attitude, so that is what I am going to do!"

The point was made. The students knew it was sarcasm, but once we decide for ourselves that we are a god and that we decide what's right and wrong, we revert back to our animal nature. We should never buy

into the propaganda that humanity is basically good. The Bible says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).

Human nature is depraved, and if it were not for the Gospel of Christ, none of us would have one ounce of goodness. But "God hath dealt to *every man* the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. God has placed in all of us a measure of goodness, which contends against our depravity.

TAKE-AND-MAKE RELIGION

As I stated earlier, some want nothing to do with God and religion. But what my atheist friends do not realize is that atheism *is* a religion. It is a "faith system" that puts its trust in science and humanistic philosophy, but more specifically, oneself.

Atheists say there is no God, yet they set themselves up as a god. And they have their denominations as well. There is Secular Humanism, Environmentalism, Darwinism, and Materialism - to name a few.

I was once upgraded to First Class on a flight. Sitting next to me was a friendly Chinese math professor from a leading American university. On his lap was a copy of the *Humanist* magazine. We started chatting and I asked him about where he worked and what he taught. Then he asked me what I do for work, I shared with him regarding *Laymen Ministries* and all the projects we have

around the world. I briefly talked about our schools in the Philippines for indigenous kids, prisoner rehabilitation in Romania and the Philippines, social work done by Bible workers in India, and health education workers in Nepal.

What he then said to me was something I have never forgotten: "Why is it that it is always 'your people' who do these kinds of things? Why can't I get more of 'my people' to do these kinds of things?" I thought about that for a long time. The religion of Christ is about helping and caring for others, while the religion of atheism is about self-serving. It is the difference between serving God and humanity or being god and serving ourselves.

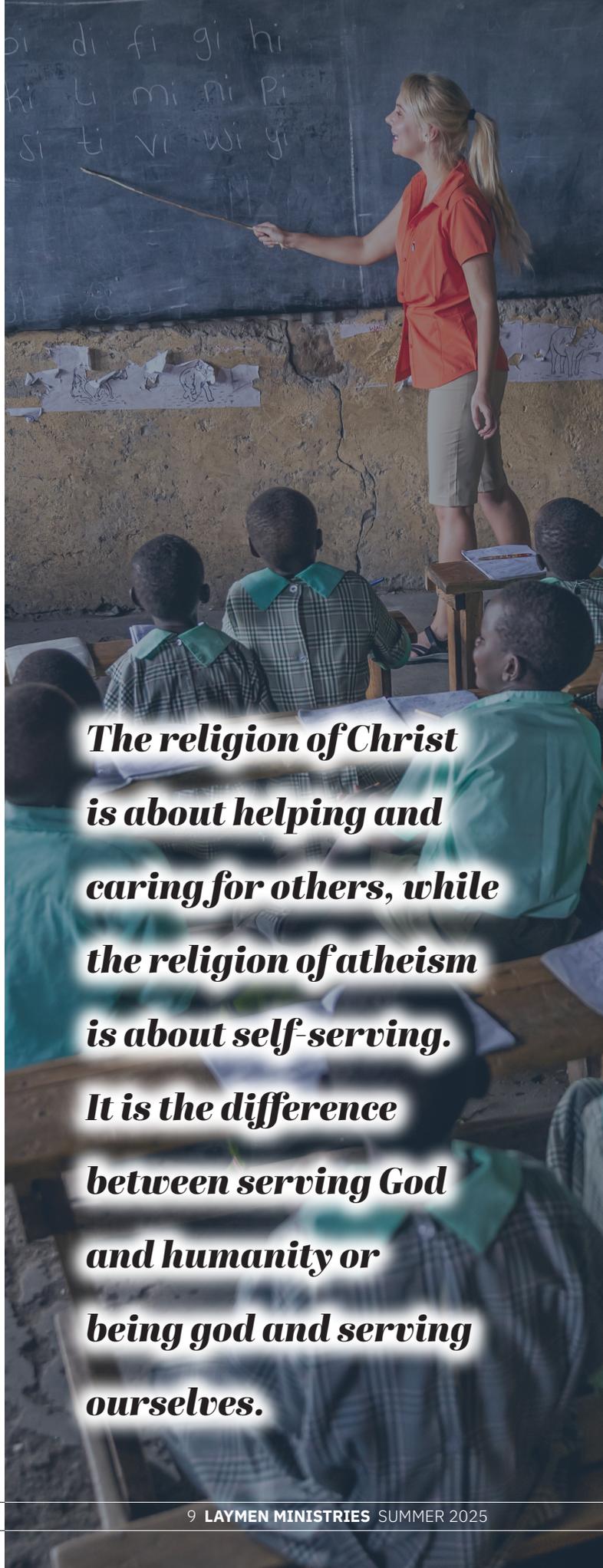
These two worldviews are diametrically opposed to each other. And it is from these two worldviews that everything is interpreted — paleo biology, paleontology, biology, geology — science per se. Bias colors everything.

THE CHOICE

I chose God's worldview years ago. It has proven itself a blessing I cannot turn my back on. But more important than that, God has shown Himself to me time and time again. I stop and look back at my life and ask "What would have happened if I had remained an atheist? Where would I be today? What good would I have done for others?" Then I look at Laymen Ministries and praise God for His goodness! Through Him we have been able to help so many people. This is true for all of us. We all have influence and we all have a purpose.

We all are left with a choice: will we be our own god, deciding what is right and wrong based on our limited experiences, situations, knowledge, and perceptions? Or will we submit ourselves to a loving God who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and ever-present? One who has a map charted out for our lives. Will our worldview be all about ourselves and our personal "universe," or will we accept God's worldview that bids us move beyond our selfishness to a love for others that passes all human understanding?

The basis of God's worldview — His morality — is summed up in His Ten Commandments, which is honoring God and loving our fellow man. What a wonderful place this world would be if, from the heart, people would keep His commandments! **LM**



***The religion of Christ
is about helping and
caring for others, while
the religion of atheism
is about self-serving.
It is the difference
between serving God
and humanity or
being god and serving
ourselves.***