



By

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The Importance of Knowing The Difference

People who ask Christians about God, the Bible, and Faith in Christ usually come in one of three basic categories: **seekers**, **skeptics** or **scoffers**. It's important for a Christian sharing the Gospel with people to know the difference.

Seekers

A “seeker” is someone who is in search of truth. Seekers are often friendly and open about their search. Their journey for truth often takes them into and through a variety of faith systems. They may have had negative experiences in some of those systems, so they may display some defensiveness or tentativeness in their questions about and response to your sharing the Gospel Truths with them. It is helpful for Christians to have some historical background in the religions and philosophies of

the world to better understand the quest for immortality. I wrote a book in 2007 called *“A History of Man’s Quest for Immortality”* to help seekers and Christians understand the world’s desire for the spiritual.

Seekers are interested in what the Bible says. They are sensitive to spiritual matters and will often compare what you read from the Bible with words they’ve learned from other religions or philosophies. In general, seekers are **not** faith bullies. However, many seekers tend to be “universalists” in the sense that they view most spiritual belief systems as different roads to the same end. They often believe that Jesus was a good man, good teacher, moral leader, etc., so I like to share with them that this Good Man, Jesus, said these words to His followers: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” (John 14:6-7) Jesus said no one can

approach God the Father except through Him (Jesus). As you look at this verse and many others in the Gospel accounts of Christ's Life, it is clear that Jesus claimed to be God and the only Path to God. Jesus ruled out every other religion and philosophy with His teachings. I get various reactions from seekers when I tell them that about Jesus. Some will listen, others will disagree, many will walk away. What you are doing with seekers is speaking the "Word" to them. Jesus already told us what happens when we speak the Word to unbelievers. Some believe – some don't. Our job is to preach the Word to everyone.

"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with

joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” Matthew 13:18-23

Another insight to the principle of “sowing the Word” is from the Apostle Paul: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6-7) When you talk with a seeker, you may be **planting** a new Word seed or you may be **watering** a Word seed someone else planted, but

know that God is the One Who gives the **increase**. Pray for wisdom as you share the Word with seekers and be confident in God's Power to save their soul.

Skeptics and Scoffers

A “skeptic” is someone who questions the validity or authenticity of something presenting itself as fact. Many skeptics are quietly skeptical and don't become confrontational about their disbelief. However, some skeptics become “scoffers” – verbally berating Christians. They are inclined to question or doubt all accepted opinions in religion and spiritual things. Skeptics doubt the Truths that Christians believe – e.g. the existence of God, the reliability of Scripture, the Life of Jesus Christ on Earth, etc. Many skeptics are atheists (i.e. anti-theists), while others would call themselves agnostics (i.e. no one can know). They usually stay out of the way of Christians, but will fight back if they feel threatened.

However, atheist scoffers **are** faith bullies looking for a fight.

Sharing the Gospel with a skeptic is different than talking with a seeker. They are not interested in what you think. They don't want to know what you know. They rarely ask questions of believers. Scoffers, on the other hand, will say things to bully you by bringing out your emotional side. They have some idea about what the Bible says Christians should be (e.g. loving, patient, kind, long suffering, etc.), so they say things specifically to evoke emotions from you that are contrary to what the Bible teaches. When you get angry or lose patience with a scoffer, they are quick to point out how far you are from the ideal of what you claim to believe. That was one of my favorite tactics when I talked with Christians on my talk show years ago. I found it easy to get Christians angry. I'm ashamed of the way I behaved before coming to Faith, but at least I can share

with you now what atheists do to push your buttons. You **can** deal with these people – effectively.

Many atheists and some agnostics spend quite a bit of time reading atheist books and talking with other unbelievers about the Christian “delusion.” Reading atheist literature and talking with other unbelievers prepares scoffers for their “mission” to confront religious people and show them the “error” of their ways. Because I used to be an atheist (skeptic and scoffer), they love to tear into me when they find out I’m now a Christian. One scoffer told me I must have been a very bad atheist to go over to the “other side.” I told him that as a journalist and “free thinker” my primary goal was to discover truth. When I discovered that God was real and had sent His Son to die for my sins, I did what any truth-seeker should do – I believed. It’s at that point when most atheists tell me to go away and leave them alone. That’s a good thing in a way because it

means the Word seed is planted and the Holy Spirit is doing what only He can do.

“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” John 16:8-11

You need to be prepared to deal with skeptics and scoffers. Their arguments appear to be logical and come from a root of reasoning. However, their logic and reason are rooted in foolishness (Psalm 14:1). That places Christians in a position of superiority. You have the True Wisdom of God dwelling in you. Here are some things you can do to be ready to defend the Gospel.

1. Know what the Bible teaches – in context. Atheists and agnostics don't have the guidance of the Holy Spirit when they quote Scripture, so they don't understand its true meaning. You do have the Spirit of God guiding you, so that puts you in a position of superiority as you talk with them about the Bible. Atheists will push back when you use the Bible to prove the Bible, but be sure they can't push you into a corner because they know more about the Bible than you do.
2. Know something about the sciences that support the Bible (e.g. archaeology, astronomy, physics, astrophysics, chemistry, biology, anthropology, hydrology, geology, meteorology, etc). Skeptics and scoffers love to use arguments from science because so many people are intimidated by the "high knowledge" of science. What Christians need to know is that **true** science is on the side of Faith. Science is the study of knowledge that can be tested, so why

should that intimidate us? Who is the Source of knowledge? That's right! Your Heavenly Father. God Created all of the laws and principles of true science, so any real test of knowledge will support what He knows. In the coming weeks and months we will share more about how science supports what God knows and tells us in His Word.

3. Know enough about the philosophies and religions of the world so you can respond to the arguments of skeptics and scoffers. Atheists look for holes in a believer's armor. Do your homework. Read as much as you can about the major philosophical views from ancient to modern times and know about as many different religions as you can help skeptics understand that Christianity is not just 'another' religion. It is the Truth.
4. Pray with other Christians about facing skeptics and scoffers in your life. God made us a family of believers

for many reasons – getting prayer support is one of them.

Trust God to help you as you talk with skeptics and scoffers. The Lord laughs at the wisdom of men – it is foolishness to Him.

“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” 1 Corinthians 1:20

“Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness’; and again, ‘The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.’ 1 Corinthians 3:18-20

“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts.”

2 Peter 3:1-3

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