

Introduction

- ▶ **How would you describe a believer?**
 - ▶ Believes in God
 - ▶ Believes Jesus rose from the dead
 - ▶ Believes the Bible is the inspired word of God
 - ▶ Has been baptized
 - ▶ Seeks to live like Christ
 - ▶ Involved with the local church

Introduction

- ▶ **How would you describe an unbeliever?**
 - ▶ “Religious unaffiliated, nones, or unchurched” are increasing
 - ▶ 25 % of “unchurched” in America are atheist or agnostic
 - ▶ 34% of skeptics are under the age of 30; ½ have a college degree

Introduction

- ▶ **3 Components of unbelief-** *Barna Group, 2015 State of Atheism*
 - ▶ Rejection of the Bible
 - ▶ Lack of trust in the local church
 - ▶ Cultural reinforcement of a secular worldview

What does this say about the future of faith & unbelief
in America?

Profile of an Unbeliever

Profile of an Unbeliever

▶ Reasons for this study

- ▶ **To defend the faith-** 1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3
- ▶ **To protect believers-** 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; Titus 1:9-11
- ▶ **To persuade unbelievers to become believers-** 2 Tim. 2:24-26

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Accepts only what can be observed by human senses
 - ▶ **God has revealed Himself-** “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:18-20 ESV).

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Accepts only what can be observed by human senses
 - ▶ **Some aspects of God are not revealed-** “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:1-3).

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Accepts only what can be observed by human senses
 - ▶ **God's revelation brings us to the point of faith**
 - ▶ John 17:20, 20:24-31
 - ▶ Heb. 11:13-16

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Appeals to human philosophy

- ▶ **Philosophy-** “the study of ideas about knowledge, truth, the nature and meaning of life; the rational investigation of the truths and principles of being, knowledge, or conduct” (Merriman-Webster & Dictionary.com).

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Appeals to human philosophy
 - ▶ **Naturalism-** laws of nature embraced; supernatural rejected
 - ▶ **Humanism-** humans are the center of existence
 - ▶ **Calvinism-** once saved, always saved
 - ▶ **Denominationalism-** equality of the churches
 - ▶ **Post-modernism-** rejection of tradition

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Appeals to human philosophy
 - ▶ **Jesus Christ is the source of knowledge & truth**
 - ▶ John 1:1, 14
 - ▶ Col. 2:1-9
 - ▶ 1 Tim. 6:20-21

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Appeals to human philosophy
 - ▶ **Human redemption is not the product of human philosophy**
 - ▶ **1 Cor. 1:18-31**
 - ▶ **1 Cor. 2**
 - ▶ **1 Cor. 3:18-21**

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ **Angry with God**

 - ▶ **Tragedy can make someone an unbeliever**

 - ▶ **Injury**

 - ▶ **Sickness**

 - ▶ **Death**

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ **Angry with God**

- ▶ **“When atheists are angry at God”**

- ▶ **Written by Joe Carter**

- ▶ **Published on January 12, 2011 in Journal of Personality & Social Psychology**

- ▶ **Reported research done at Case Western Reserve University by Julie Exline**

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Angry with God

- ▶ **“When atheists are angry at God”**

- ▶ **Julie Exline:** “At first glance, this finding seemed to reflect an error. How could people be angry with God if they did not believe in God? Reanalyses of a second dataset revealed similar patterns: Those who endorsed their religious beliefs as “atheist/agnostic” or “none/unsure” reported more anger toward God than those who reported a religious affiliation.”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Angry with God

- ▶ **“When atheists are angry at God”**

- ▶ **Julie Exline:** “Studies in traumatic events suggest a possible link between suffering, anger toward God, and doubts about God’s existence. According to Cook and Wimberly (1983), 33% of parents who suffered the death of a child reported doubts about God in the first year of bereavement. In another study, 90% of mothers who had given birth to a profoundly handicapped child voiced doubts about the existence of God (Childs, 1985).”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ **Angry with God**

- ▶ **“When atheists are angry at God”**

- ▶ **Julie Exline:** “Our survey research with undergraduates has focused directly on the association between anger at God and self-reported drops in belief (Exline et al., 2004). In the wake of a negative life event, anger toward God predicted decreased belief in God’s existence.”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Angry with God

- ▶ **God is not the cause of sin & death**

- ▶ **Rom. 5:12:** “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ **Angry with God**

- ▶ **God is not the cause of sin & death**

- ▶ **Jas. 1:12-13:** “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Angry with God

- ▶ **God working to destroy sin & death**

- ▶ **Gen. 3:15:** “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Angry with God

- ▶ **God working to destroy sin & death**

- ▶ **Matt. 16:18:** “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Angry with God

- ▶ **God working to destroy sin & death**

- ▶ **1 Cor. 15:22-26:** “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ **Angry with God**

- ▶ **God working to destroy sin & death**

- ▶ **1 Cor. 15:54-57:** “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Angry with God

- ▶ **Suffering can strengthen belief**

- ▶ **Rom. 5:1-5:** “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Profile of an Unbeliever

- ▶ Angry with God

- ▶ **Suffering can strengthen belief**

- ▶ **Jas. 1:2-4:** “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

Introduction

- ▶ **3 Components of unbelief-** *Barna Group, 2015 State of Atheism*
 - ▶ Rejection of the Bible
 - ▶ Lack of trust in the local church
 - ▶ Cultural reinforcement of a secular worldview

How must believers address these issues to stem the tide of unbelief?

Stemming the Tide of Unbelief

- ▶ Embrace the Bible

- ▶ **2 Tim. 3:15-4:5**

- ▶ **Acts 20:32**

Stemming the Tide of Unbelief

- ▶ Embrace the Bible

- ▶ Unite the local church

 - ▶ **John 17:20-23**

 - ▶ **Eph. 4:1-3**

Stemming the Tide of Unbelief

- ▶ Embrace the Bible
- ▶ Unite the local church
- ▶ Live as Christ
 - ▶ **Phil. 1:20, 27**
 - ▶ **1 Pet. 2:11-12, 21-24**