



URBANA18

December 27 – 31, 2018 | St. Louis, MO | urbana.org



Love Your Atheist/Humanist Neighbor

- Rick Mattson, National Evangelist/Apologetist
- InterVarsity
- Based in St. Paul, MN



Thesis

Live a life-style of:

- Prayer
- Care
- Share



Atheism: Modern

- Often “Science only”
- Darwinism/evolution
- Philosophical Naturalism
- Tends to be found in STEM
- Example: Richard Dawkins



Atheism: Postmodern

- Truth is relative to perspective, experience, story
- Justice: traditional structures in politics, literature, economics, art, etc. must be dismantled
- Tends to be found in Humanities
- Example: Michel Foucault



Humanism

- Believing in human potential and ability without God
- Darwinism
- Philosophical Naturalism
- Example: Greg Epstein, the Humanist Chaplain at Harvard



Basic Principles of Witness

- God goes before us
- We are detectives, not salespeople
- Witness flows from devotion
- Listen and be patient. Hear their story
- You don't have to be an expert
- Be a seed planter
- Use the power of community
- Summary: Prayer, Care, Share

A decorative background of vibrant blue ink splatters and swirls against a solid black background, creating a dynamic and artistic effect.

Colossians 4:3-6

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.



Five Thresholds of Conversion
from *I Once Was Lost*
by Shaupp and Everts

1. Trust a Christian
2. Become Curious
3. Become Open to Change
4. Become a True Seeker
5. Become a Follower of Jesus

A decorative background of blue ink splatters and swirls on a black background, positioned at the top and right of the slide.

Dialogue with Science-only Atheists

- Pray and care
- Slow down
- Hear their story
- Affirm science
- Affirm science AND faith
- Soft spots:
 - Consciousness
 - Ethics
 - Origins



Consciousness

“If life is not just a physical phenomenon, the origin and evolution of life and mind will not be explainable by physics and chemistry alone.”

Atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel



Intentionality

“The problem of accounting for . . . intentionality is, I believe, the really *hard* problem of consciousness. So here the naturalist is, admittedly, caught flat-footed.”

- Atheist philosopher Evan Fales



Dialogue with Humanists

- Affirm the good
- Remember “common grace” (Psalm 145:9, Matt 5:45)
- Image of God damaged but not destroyed
- Christian community: Transformation
- Why choose the good?
 - Thomas Jefferson = Joseph Stalin
- The real issue: is naturalism *true*?



Ethics and Morality

“How do I justify my [practical] ethical beliefs? . . . There is no justification! . . . [ethics are] psychological beliefs put in place by natural selection to improve our reproductive fitness. I am an ethical skeptic.”

- Atheist philosopher Michael Ruse



Dialogue with Postmodern Atheists

- Visit an art museum together
- Seek out meaningful experiences of wonder, beauty, service
- Question the premise that truth is related only to perspective.
- Read the Bible together and ask questions



The Ultimate Issue: REZ of Jesus

- Is Jesus the Son of God come to earth?
 - If so, we must listen to him.
 - If not, everything is up for grabs
- The resurrection is the lynchpin of the identity of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15)
- Are the Gospel accounts true?

The background of the slide is black, featuring large, vibrant blue ink splatters that resemble smoke or liquid paint falling from the top. The splatters are dense and textured, creating a dynamic, abstract pattern.

Are the Gospel Accounts true?

from *Faith is Like Skydiving*

- M: monotheism. 1st c. Palestinian Jews were monotheists
- O: overlapping material of the gospels, epistles
- D: differences in the accounts are helpful
- E: embarrassing material in the accounts makes them more likely true
- M: manuscript tradition is the bomb
- S: secular (nonChristians) sources



Books by Rick Mattson

- *Faith is Like Skydiving* (to coach your conversations with skeptics)
- *Faith Unexpected* (a short book of faith stories for nonChristian family and friends)

The background of the slide is black, featuring large, vibrant blue ink splatters that flow from the top left towards the right. The splatters are intricate and organic in shape, creating a dynamic and artistic visual effect.

Recommended Books

- *I Once Was Lost* by Schaupp and Everts
- *The Universe Next Door* by James Sire
- *Letters From a Skeptic* by Greg Boyd
- *Surprised by Hope* by NT Wright
- *Christian Apologetics* by Douglas Groothuis
- *Philosophy of Religion* by Evans and Manis
- *God Behaving Badly* by David Lamb
- *The Jesus Legend* by Boyd and Eddy



How to Contact me

- www.Rickmattsonoutreach.com
- Rick.Mattson@intervarsity.org
- Faith is Like Skydiving: on Amazon or InterVarsity Press
- Faith Unexpected: at www.faithunexpectedstories.com