

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE REJECT GOD?

1 Timothy 1:13 ... “although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

Our two previous devotionals were about atheists and agnostics, two types of people who have no interest in God, with atheists taking it a step further and denying that God exists. But they are not the only ones who reject God. Many decide that even if God exists, they are unwilling to submit to his authority. Others feel that God's expectations are too restrictive; they do not want to live according to “do and don'ts” – similar to your children. Still others reject God because of a bad experience, perhaps as a child. Many atheists I have met, fall into the latter category. In their past, they observed or heard something about God that they did not like; they may have been abused by someone in the church; or, they just felt that their parents' religious beliefs were unreasonable. That left them bitter and angry, which led them to the conviction that believing in God is foolish.

There are any number of reasons why people reject God. Our list above is nowhere near complete. My father wanted nothing to do with God because he thought church members were hypocrites. When he was a child his mother supported the work of the church while her children starved. That left him bitter about Christians and the church. My grandfather refused to attend church for most of his adult life, because a pastor had one time cheated him. But, in his elder years he got over that and returned to the church. I suppose a number of readers of this devotional could offer their own explanations why they rejected God for part of their lives.

The important thing for us as believers to know, is that many people outside the church have at one time or another been wounded by Christians or the church itself. Many people carry bitterness, anger or hurt feelings about how a Christian treated them, or because they were embarrassed in church, or some other emotional wound that keeps them from God. You do not have to attend church to be born again and enjoy an intimate relationship with Jesus. However, for most people, church is the gateway to that relationship. If we clutter that gateway with needless rules and policies, make believers uncomfortable and humiliate them in some way, or disgrace them because of their appearance, we may turn more people away from God than we bring into his presence.

The church is not a resort for believers, but a hospital for the spiritually sick. If you and your church make non-believers feel that they must get saved before they can attend your church, you may be helping to create more atheists and agnostics. Study how your church treats visitors and strangers. If you find it incompatible with how Christ treated strangers, work with your church leadership to unclutter the gateway to God that your church is supposed to be offering.

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