

## What We Can Learn from an Atheist

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • May 6, In the year of our Lord, 2015

### **Prelude:**

#### **I. I read an article in *Answers* magazine (July–September 2010, pages 26–28),**

- A. in which the writer gleaned lessons from
- B. Penn Jillette, a world-famous magician.

#### **II. Mr. Jillette is also a bold atheist,**

- A. who uses his bombastic nature and
- B. fearlessness before the public
  - 1. to argue against belief in God.
  - 2. He does not go easy on anyone.
- C. While he is liberal,
  - 1. he does not hesitate to blast liberals when he disagrees with them.
  - 2. He does the same to us.

#### **III. However, the article referenced a short video that Penn Jillette made**

- A. that might surprise you, and
- B. show us somethings that we need to consider as Christians
  - 1. in dealing with atheists and those like them.
  - 2. We have to avoid getting frustrated with them and
    - a) remember how the Lord dealt with us, and
    - b) remember His teachings on how to deal with people.

### **Persuasion:**

#### **I. Go Back**

- A. Did you miss an opportunity?
  - 1. Did you say something that you should not have said?
  - 2. Did you make a mistake?

- B. Once when my dermatologist cut something off my chest, and then
1. cauterized it, although lying on my back
  2. the “aroma” came up into my nose.
    - a) I said that it was interesting to smell my own flesh burning.
    - b) He then said that I could tell my congregation as I preach
      - (1) that is what it would be like in hell, that is,
      - (2) you will be able to smell your own flesh burning.
        - (a) For some reason, I said, “That is what I preach.”
        - (b) Why did I make such a statement?
          - i) Is that what I preach?
          - ii) I talked to his nurse at the next visit,
            - (1) explaining myself further,
            - (2) telling her what I do preach.
              - (a) I tried to make a connection with him and worship.
              - (b) He said he prays direct.

## **II. Compliment**

- A. Why is it important to compliment people?
1. It breaks down their defenses.
  2. It softens them up.
- B. Did the Lord ever compliment?

## **III. Be Patient and Respectful**

- A. What does impatience and disrespect do?
- B. How do you want people to be with you?

## **IV. Be Bold**

- A. If you go to them with doubts,
1. they will walk all over you, and

2. they will not listen to you.
  - a) Why should they listen to you,
  - b) if you are not even sure yourself?

## V. Be Sincere and Show You Care

- A. Is not the message of the Bible,
  1. which should also be our message,
  2. that God loves the world, and
    - a) offered His Son Jesus Christ
    - b) for everyone's salvation?
- B. Let that come through your speech and actions.

## VI. Do Not Attack

- A. When someone attacks you,
  1. what do you do?
  2. You defend yourself.
- B. What will someone do whom you attack?
  1. He will defend himself.
  2. What then have we accomplished?

## VII. Look Them in the Eyes

- A. What does looking a person in the eye convey?
- B. Make note of Mark's comment
  1. as he prefaced what Jesus said to the rich young ruler,

**21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him... (Mark 10.21).**

2. Looking at someone as you talk confirms what?

## VIII. Talk to Them

- A. Engage in conversation.
- B. We believe we have the superior knowledge, because
  - 1. we believe in God, but
  - 2. does that mean the atheist has nothing to offer?

### **IX. Be Christ-Like**

- A. Did Jesus interrupt?
- B. How did Jesus conduct conversations?

### **X. Let Your Light Shine**

- A. No, you probably will not convert them on the spot.
- B. Perhaps you prepared the soil.
  - 1. You might have even gone further and
  - 2. planted a seed.
    - a) Still someone else might have planted the seed, and
    - b) now you are watering it.

### **Exhortation:**

#### **I. Perhaps we can sum it up, saying,**

- A. what kind of person would get your attention, and
- B. make you want to consider Christianity?

#### **II. Then put into place the Golden Rule,**

**31 “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise”  
(Luke 6.31).**

#### **III. Also, we should not assume**

- A. that people have no interest,
- B. unless they have already said so.