

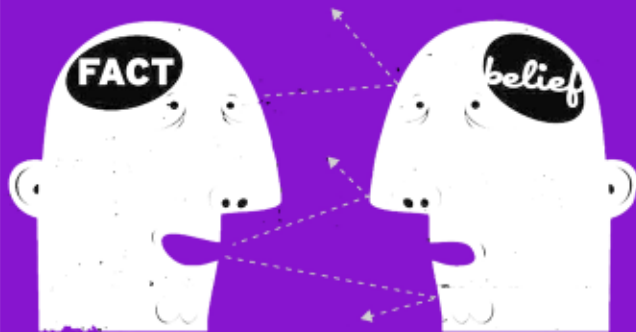
## DISCUSSION TOPICS:

WHY CAN'T YOU JUST LET PEOPLE BELIEVE WHAT THEY WANT TO BELIEVE? LEAVE PEOPLE ALONE? WHAT DOES IT HURT?

WHAT IF YOU'RE WRONG?

YOU'RE NOT ARGUING AGAINST SANTA CLAUS.

MY RELIGION AND YOUR RELIGION, OR LACK OF, ARE CLOSELY HELD BELIEFS AND ARE IMPORTANT TO US BOTH. WHY DO YOU WANT TO "ROCK THE BOAT"?



IEAAH  
INLAND EMPIRE ATHEISTS, AGNOSTICS & HUMANISTS



Freethinkers Around Redlands



Desert Atheist Community



Victor Valley



Atheists & Agnostics

# BELIEF

AN ATHEIST  
DISCUSSES BELIEF

## **Why can't you just let people believe what they want to believe? What does it hurt?**

Everyone has a right to believe whatever they want; however, social and legal mores limit our actions. Private religious observance is much less of a problem so long as it's kept private. Brought into the public sphere, it becomes everyone's business. Like smoking; the impact on everyone else is practically nonexistent if done alone. Smoking in public however impinges on other people's access to clean air, so no one believes in absolute isolation because our beliefs guide our actions. If you would want to rescue a child trapped in a car with smoking parents and the windows rolled up, you can empathize with what it's like watching people indoctrinate children with bogus supernatural mumbo-jumbo. If you start out with wrong information, no matter how logically and critically you think, everything after that is colored and influenced by it and human progress stalls.

## **You're not arguing against Santa Claus.**

People aren't voting to change laws to privilege Santa believers or impose their Santa belief on the rest of the community, and as soon as anyone tried you'd see activist groups form in opposition. They might even feel the compulsion to call themselves "Asantaists" ... or even "Anti-santaists".

## **What if you're wrong?**

Wrong about what? Atheism, meaning "without theism", is not making any claim because this expression is simply the absence of theist belief. Atheism meaning the belief that theism is wrong is only a response to theists' claims because they haven't provided any objective evidence to support it. Trying to protect oneself against God's wrath just in case he is real is called 'Pascal's Wager' - the reason it is not persuasive is we don't believe in all claimed versions of gods.

You don't believe in any of them except one - yours. We are taking the same risk, and the angst you feel about potentially being punished for eternity in everyone else's faith system is the same I feel about yours. You waste no time wearing garlic around your neck to repel vampires on the off chance you'll ever encounter one and it doesn't cause you the least hesitation. However, if objective evidence for the existence of vampires was ever presented, I would be covered in cloves of garlic all day every day.

## **My religion and your religion, or lack of, are closely held beliefs and are important to us both. Why do you want to "rock the boat"?**

Most people are generally interested in the truth. However when we begin with wrong information and build our lives, families and culture around it, we humans are headed in the wrong direction because we didn't start out with correct information. We fight and kill each other over whose god is the "real" god and waste our valuable time on earth pursuing paths based on these non-truths.

When your god demands you kill those who do not believe in your god (Quran 8:12-13, 47:4 , Deuteronomy 18:20, Leviticus 20:13 and 27, Luke 19:27 , Exodus 22:19, 2 Chronicles 15:12-13, Deuteronomy 13:13-19) this is one of the reasons that the boat needs rocking. Religions can be defined by the contents of their canonical texts even when most of the adherents are more moral than the scriptures they hold sacred.