

Can you be Good without God?

Recently I read an article in USA Today *“As atheists know YOU CAN BE GOOD WITHOUT GOD”*—*subtitle: Human morality is instinctual and fits into the evolutionary paradigm. In fact, morality without faith might be the best option of all.* The article begins with *“One cold day last February, I watched a Federal Express delivery man...[slip on an icy street]...Without thinking, I ran into the street, stopped cars, hoisted the man up and helped him recover his load...I realized my act of altruism had been completely instinctive...”*

Out of the “primordial soup” of this incident the writer “evolves” his theory of instinctual human morality without God. Without burdening you with the entire article I quote only those parts he intends as his “missing links.” *“As a biologist, I see belief in God-given morality as American’s biggest impediment to accepting the fact [not theory] of evolution...But though both moral and immoral behaviors can be promoted by religions, morality itself—either in individual behavior or social codes—simply cannot come from the will or commands of God...So where does morality come from, if not from God? Two places: evolution and secular reasoning.”* He ends with these words: *“Clearly, you can be good without God.”*

In response to his article, I chose to treat him as he did the Federal Express man. Slipped and scattered boxes of information treated as fact instead of theory, ideas and ignorance gathered from a variety of philosophical and personal opinions, his evolutionary atheism is an icy street with a lot of traffic bearing down on him.

To help him regain his footing, let’s assume for a moment morality could evolve out of the genome of any world culture/society, whether secular or religious. So what separates belief in God from the atheist as it concerns ethics and morality?

I’d like to answer in the following way. Being moral does not necessarily result in being good. But being good always results in being moral. How can this be? The evolutionary atheist has no answer. But there is an answer. The living record of the Biblical “column” has the “missing link.” Read with me the following account of a man’s encounter with Jesus on an “icy street” in Israel 2,000 years ago.

“...a certain ruler questioned Jesus, saying, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ And Jesus said unto him, ‘Why do you call me GOOD? No one is GOOD except God alone.’ (Luke 18:18-19) Then it steps down from the realm of the good to that of the ethical (moral). ‘You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’ And he said, ‘All these things I have done since my youth.’ (Luke 18:20-1)

To which Jesus replied, *“[If you want to experience the Good and not just the self serving morality of humans] give up all you possess and follow me.”* The man’s response was that what he had and what he believed in was too much for him to give up. To him Jesus said, *“...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for [you] to enter the [Goodness] of God.” (Luke 18:22, 25)*

As evolution goes, with its survival of the fittest mentality, I would much rather take my chances on a Good God than a knee jerk instinctual morality based on self-serving motives. Does God exist? God does at least in my thinking. And as Rousseau said centuries ago, *“I think; therefore, I am.”* Or as Mr. T so often said to the A Team, *“I pity the fool.”* —Rev. Bud Hill, Central Christian Church—

