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# Key Notes

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Though the evidence for God's non-existence is questionable at best and though roughly 98% of the U.S. population claims to believe that God does exist, atheism has become fashionable again.

When I was growing up in the sixties, atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair led the angry crusade that resulted in the elimination of prayer from public schools. Back then, atheism was in vogue (mod, hip, groovy). In those days, even seminary professors were declaring that "God is dead."

During the seventies, eighties and nineties, atheists seemed to disappear. The Jesus People, a "born again" president (Jimmy Carter), the Moral Majority, the appearance of mega-churches, Christian radio and television, Christian music and publishing, Promise Keepers, and other religious movements swept across the Nation. God wasn't dead. Indeed, He was alive and well, thank you very much.

But now the atheists are back... and with a vengeance! And apparently their angry voices are finding a receptive audience. Indeed, attacking "God" is one of the new ways to become a best-selling author. In the past year alone, atheism's new champions have sold nearly one million copies of their books! Enter any bookstore across America and you'll be greeted with titles like:

- *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* by Christopher Hitchens.
- *Letter to a Christian Nation* by Sam Harris.
- *God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows that God Does Not Exist* by Victor J. Stenger.
- *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* by Daniel C. Dennett.

Though claiming to be "scientific," many of these books are militant, venomous and inaccurate. For example, Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*) describes "God" as "a petty, unjust, unforgiving, control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty, ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal... megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." (How's that for objective scientific inquiry?)

But before mounting a counter-attack against such bombastic broadsides, pause and ask yourself this question: *Why* is atheism making such a comeback? The tragic reality is that atheists are finding an audience again because many of us who claim to be Christian have not lived in a manner that has made "the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (Titus 2:10). Our walk has discredited our talk. Peter reminds us how the truth of the Gospel ought to be defended.

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*

(1 Peter 3:15-16)

Pastor Stan