

C¹ onechurch

bigIdea

A *Christian Atheist* is someone who believes in God but lives as if He does not exist. Anne Rice, who wrote the book *Interview with the Vampire*, became a Christ Follower back in 2000. This past week Anne Rice announced that she is quitting Christianity.

“Today I quit being a Christian. Though my faith in Christ is central to my life, it's simply impossible for me to ‘belong’ to this quarrelsome, hostile, disputatious, and deservedly infamous group.



You see, Rice isn't leaving Jesus. She is leaving organized Christianity—she is leaving the church! Rice loves Jesus, she just doesn't like the church! God drew Anne Rice to Jesus and the church. And you know what? The church pushed Anne Rice away. Is that how it's supposed to be?

BIG IDEA: A Christian Atheist is someone who believes right things but treats others wrong.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Without being overly negative and naming names, tell of a time when you or know someone who left a church because of something that happened relationally.
- Jesus says, “If you really want to know if a person is a Christian, then they... What would you put in that blank?”
 - How many times you attend Church?
 - How much Bible Knowledge you have?
 - How you vote politically on the issues?
 - How much money you give?
 - How you treat others?
 - Where you serve in the church?
- Read *John 13:34-35*. What command does Jesus repeat three times in these two verses?
- These verses come in a broader context. Describe in your own words what the disciples just experienced with Jesus (*John 13:1-30*). The example of loving others is, “As I have loved you.” How did Jesus just show love to them?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you think oneChurch rank against the standard of love Jesus gave? How could you increase the score?
- Read *Matthew 22:34-40*. What do you think what was the motive behind the question asked to Jesus? There were over 600 laws for Jewish people in the 1st century. Do you think it was hard for Jesus to narrow them down? Of the 10 Commandments (*Exodus 20:2-17*), which ones deal with loving God? Which ones deal with loving others like yourself?
- Read *Acts 19*. What do we know about the church of Ephesus?
- Read *Revelation 2:1-7*. What good things characterized the church at Ephesus? What did the Church at Ephesus have going for it? How might its strengths have been the cause of its failure? What do you think their weekly worship was like?
- Why did Jesus give this church an F—a failing grade? What was Jesus fix for their love problem?
- The NLT translates 2:4 as ““But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first”. The NIV translates 2:4 as, “But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love”. What is similar about these verses? What is different? Why do you think the people who translated these verses substituted *first love* with *love me or each other as you did at first*?
- In what ways have you lost your first love for Christ (v. 4)? What has helped keep your love for Jesus alive?

THINK ABOUT IT

You can be a Christian atheist by believing all of the right things and treating others wrong. The reason why we have so many different denominations today has less to do with doctrinal differences than with our ability to love others. Most churches get started not by church planters but by church splitters, because two groups of people couldn't get along. We are not a people of love. That is what a true Christian is all about—loving God and loving others.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:35