

learning more about Biblical times and people can make the Bible more interesting. Learning about how the Bible was written, edited, and assembled can also be quite interesting.

- Perhaps the most mundane reason to read the Bible is to be able to say that you did. If a religious person challenges you to read the Bible and see if it inspires you to belief in God or acceptance of the message of Jesus, you can say that you already have, and you had no divine revelation.



# SHOULD ATHEISTS READ THE BIBLE?

A Question of Moral Atheism

*from blog.iamanatheist.com*



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So if there is no compelling need to investigate religion in general, is there a good reason to read the Bible in particular? For an atheist living in the United States (or another country with a similar religious makeup, history, or culture), there may be several reasons, including:

- The Bible contains many cultural references (Adam and Eve, the exodus, Job, Jesus' miracles, etc.), and famous passages ("Am I my brother's keeper?"; "Blessed are the meek," etc.) and it is worth being familiar with these whether or not you are religious.
- The Bible is a very popular book, so many people have read it. This gives you a social reason to read the Bible — once you've read it, you can discuss it with others.
- Although much of it is legend, the Bible also has some legitimate history in it. If nothing else, the chapters on Jewish laws can be quite interesting.
- For an atheist (or skeptical theist), reading the Bible can be an excellent exercise in critical thinking. Some passages have a meaning that is only really clear when read in the context of the time it was written, and

IT'S RELIGIOUS, IT'S WRONG, IT'S BORING, IT'S OLD — why should an atheist read the Bible? It's a fair question, one that a religious person might counter with, "How can you say you disagree with something you haven't even read?"

Let's address that last point first: is an atheist required to research a religion before not believing in it? Ideally, a good skeptic researches every aspect of an issue before arriving at a conclusion. But, in practice, there just isn't enough time in the day to in-depth research on every possible topic of contention. Choices must be made; priorities set.

A religious person might argue that God is the most important subject of all and therefore demands to be thoroughly investigated. But to an atheist, something with an extremely high likelihood of not existing may pale in importance to other issues. Also, considering how many religions there are in the world, seriously sorting through to see if any of them might be correct is quite a daunting task. A religious person might suggest that only their religion needs to be investigated, but a person of any religion might say that.

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- the Bible was written, edited, and assembled can also make the Bible more interesting. Learning about how learning more about Biblical times and people can

# QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

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We appreciate your interest in helping us spread information about moral atheism! To make copies of this pamphlet for your own use or to share with friends, follow these simple steps:

1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on [blog.iamanatheist.org](http://blog.iamanatheist.org). Thanks!

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