

# “WITH”: REIMAGINING THE WAY YOU RELATE TO GOD A STUDY OF “WITH” BY SKYE JETHANI LESSON 3: A LIFE OVER GOD

## I. Practicing a “faith” that has little room for God

### A. Atheism

1. Definition:
2. Characteristics:
  - a. Tend to believe that people who believe in God are stupid  
“They feel uneducated, which they are; often rather stupid, which they are; inferior, which they are; and paranoid about pointy-headed intellectuals from the East Coast looking down on them, which, with some justification, they do” (Richard Dawkins)
  - b. Tend to be motivated by anger. They want to blame others. (An example: the Bible supports slavery – does not support women).
  - c. Tend to believe in laws of nature. Hold a high view of nature.
  - d. Tend to use the inconsistency of mankind to prove the lack of moral “insight” by God.
  - e. Tend to dismiss any supernatural accounts especially the Bible.
3. Variations:
  - a. “New Atheists” – advocate open confrontation with religious believers
  - b. “Accomodationists” – advocate “partnering with religious people and institutions to advance issues of mutual concern.”

### B. Secular Humanism

1. Definitions: “An approach to life that tries to be positive, rational, realistic and open minded.” ([www.secularhumanism.org](http://www.secularhumanism.org)). These folks are “non theists.” They do not “rely upon gods or other supernatural forces to solve their problems or provide guidance for their conduct.”
2. The impact of the enlightenment  
Natural law replaced divine law

“The new view said the universe was like a machine and our job was to understand how it operated and then leverage those principles to control it.”  
(p. 46)

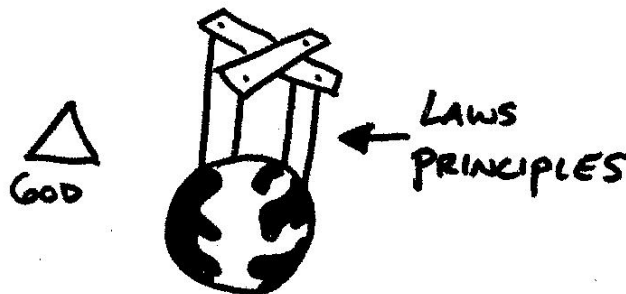
### C. Deism

Definition: A religious philosophy that sees the universe as a product of an intelligent creator. But that creator rarely if ever intervenes in human affairs and he does not suspend natural laws of the universe.

### D. Christian Deism – the Watch Maker concept

The bottom line from all four world views: God has no bearing on our daily existence.

## II. Life Over God



This is an attempt to seek control (allay our post-Eden fears) “by discovering how the world works and then directly implementing the right principles.” (p. 48)

### A. The Principles

1. “A principle is a principle, and God created all the principles.” (p. 50)  
Examples: Laws of gravity, laws of thermodynamics, laws of mathematics
2. These laws (principles) include all other areas of life: leadership, relationships, business and daily living.
  - a. The Bible is seen as “basic instructions before leaving earth” – it is an owner’s manual
  - b. “We search the scriptures for applicable principles that we may employ to control our word and life.” (p. 51)
  - c. The Bible is reduced “from God’s revelation of Himself to merely a revelation of divine principles for life.” See John 5:39-40

### B. The advantages to this posture:

It is far more “predictable and manageable than an actual relationship with God.” (p. 54)

- C. The disadvantages to life over God
  - 1. God is reduced to a “formula” not a creator to be worshipped. For example: “Effectiveness” in ministry becomes the goal, rather than faithfulness to His calling.
  - 2. “We remove the need for prayer, spiritual discernment or God’s active participation in the process in favor of a utilitarian ethic.” (p. 59)
  - 3. It reduces or limits God and leaves us in charge. Consider Isa. 55:8-9
  - 4. It does not take away our burdens or fears. Consider Solomon’s concerns when he became King (1 Kings 3:7-9)
- D. Conclusion: consider the story of Moses in Numbers 20
  - 1. Situation #1: Smack the rock
  - 2. Situation #2: Speak to the rock
  - 3. Result #1 / #2: Water came out but Moses was not allowed in the Promised Land.

Life over God is no life at all!

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## Discussion Questions

- 1. What do the tenets of atheism, secular humanism and deism have in common?
- 2. What is the danger of espousing Christian deism? What does that world view remove for the Christian?
- 3. Do you think the Bible is an “owner’s manual?” Why or why not?
- 4. What can you personally take away from the story of Moses and the rock?