

# ENGAGING SKEPTICS

Listening to  
former Atheists' advice  
to Christians

JANA HARMON



# DOES God exist?

Loss of belief  
Loss of plausibility

SOMETHING THAT  
DOESN'T SEEM  
GOOD, TRUE, OR  
WORTH  
BELIEVING





DOES God  
MATTER?

Return of  
plausibility?

SOMETHING THAT  
SEEMS GOOD,  
TRUE, OR WORTH  
BELIEVING

Who am I? Why am I here?  
What **SATISFIES** my deepest longings?

EXISTENTIAL  
OUGHTNESS



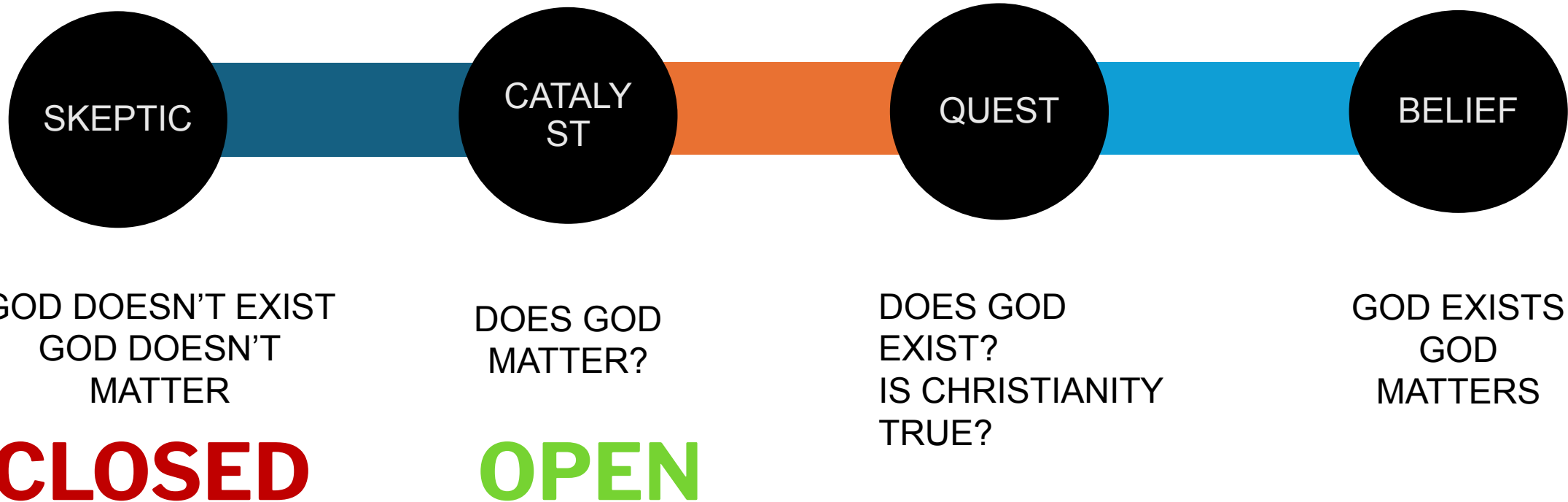
# REALITY CHECK



63% WOULD NEVER CHANGE

54% DISSATISFIED WITH ATHEISM

# Timeline





People  
almost  
invariably  
arrive at  
their beliefs  
not on the  
basis of  
proof but on  
the basis of  
what they  
find  
attractive.

Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662

# QUESTION

HOW DO WE MAKE  
BELIEF IN GOD  
ATTRACTIVE?





# GOOD NEWS



*By far the most significant finding is the influence of a strong Christian friend. A whopping 72% of these biographies included a positive encounter with a Christian or Christians as a major turning point in the person's opinion of Christianity.*

Joel Furches, 2023  
32 Atheists who convert – a Case study

# BASIC RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

1. **DON'T PRESUME.** Realize everyone is different.
2. **LISTEN and ASK GOOD QUESTIONS.** Create  
openness.
3. **ENGAGE THEM WHERE THEY ARE.** Not where they  
aren't.

“Nobody holds beliefs in a vacuum. Their convictions are wrapped in a story of how they got there and why they believe what they believe.”

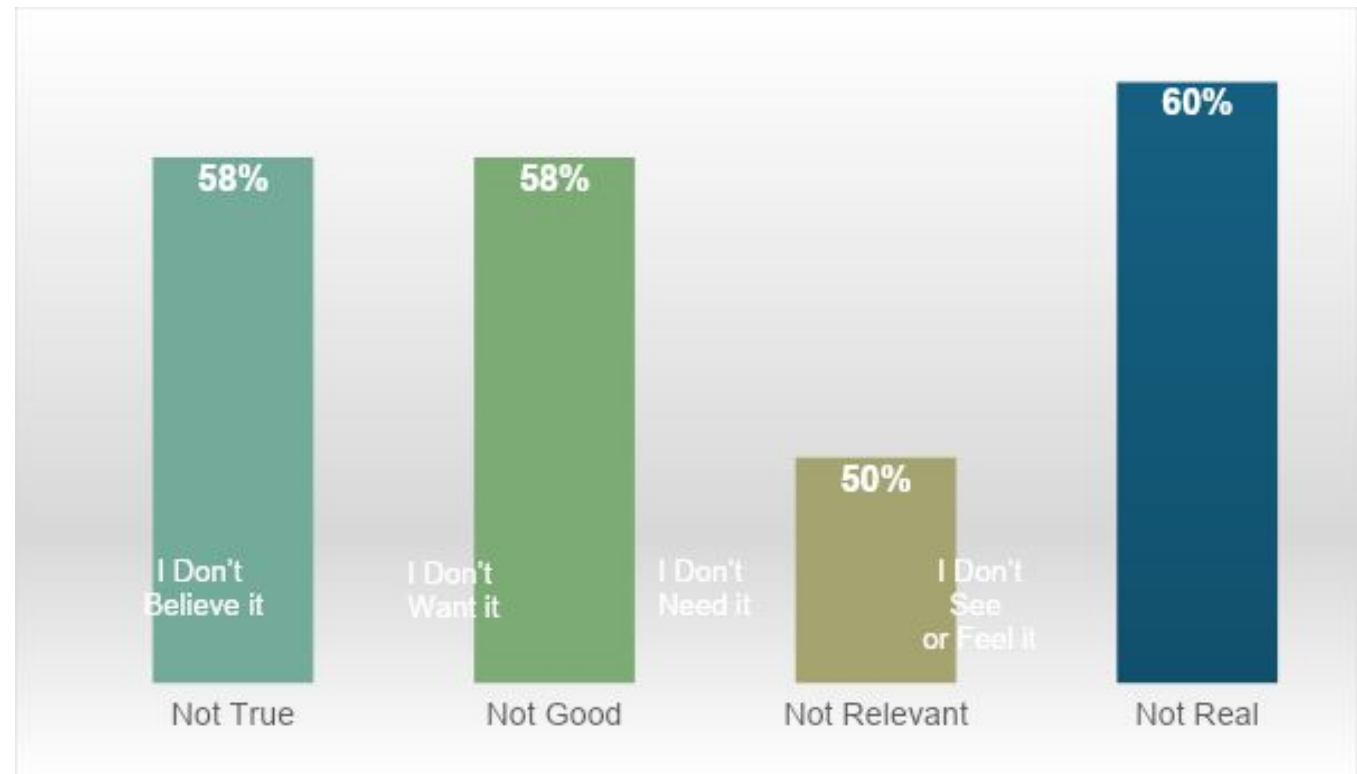
Tim Meuhlhoff, PhD, Biola

**VALUE THEIR STORY.**



# Skeptics' view of god and belief

- Not True
- Not Good
- Not Relevant
- Not Real



# COUNTERING THE NARRATIVE

## BREAKING DOWN

Negative stereotypes

False beliefs

and **BUILDING**

Plausibility

Openness



INTOLERANT

BIGOTED

HYPOCRITIC  
AL

NOT GOOD

“I DON’T WANT IT”



ENGAGED

EMBODIED

D  
AUTHENTIC

GOOD

BE PRESENT IN THEIR LIVES  
Show them a better story  
than what they've seen



OUTDATED

MORALISTI

C  
INTOLERA

NT  
WEAK

NOT  
RELEVANT

“I DON'T NEED IT”





MEANINGFUL

SATISFYI

NG  
ATTRACTI  
VE

RELEVANT

BE PRESENT IN THEIR LIVES

Show them belief in God  
makes a difference



FELT PAIN

FELT

ABSENCE

FELT

LONELINESS

FELT

CONFUSION

NOT REAL

“I DON’T SEE OR FEEL IT”



LOVING

SAFE

AVAILABLE

GENEROUS

real

BE PRESENT IN TIME OF NEED  
Show them what love is



UNEDUCATED

IGNORANT

T  
DEFENSIVE

E  
FEARFUL

not True

“I DON’T BELIEVE IT”



EDUCATED

INFORMED

D  
OPEN

CONFIDENT

NT  
HUMBLE

True

BE PREPARED

Introduce them a better  
(worldview) story.

Ask strategic questions.



**BE PATIENT.**



**Be persevering, not pushy.**

**BE PRAYERFUL.**



**Depend on the Holy Spirit**



Make  
religion  
attractive,  
Make good  
men  
wish it were  
true, then  
show that it  
is.

Blaise Pascal,  
1623-1662



# Former skeptics

Tell their stories

Give advice

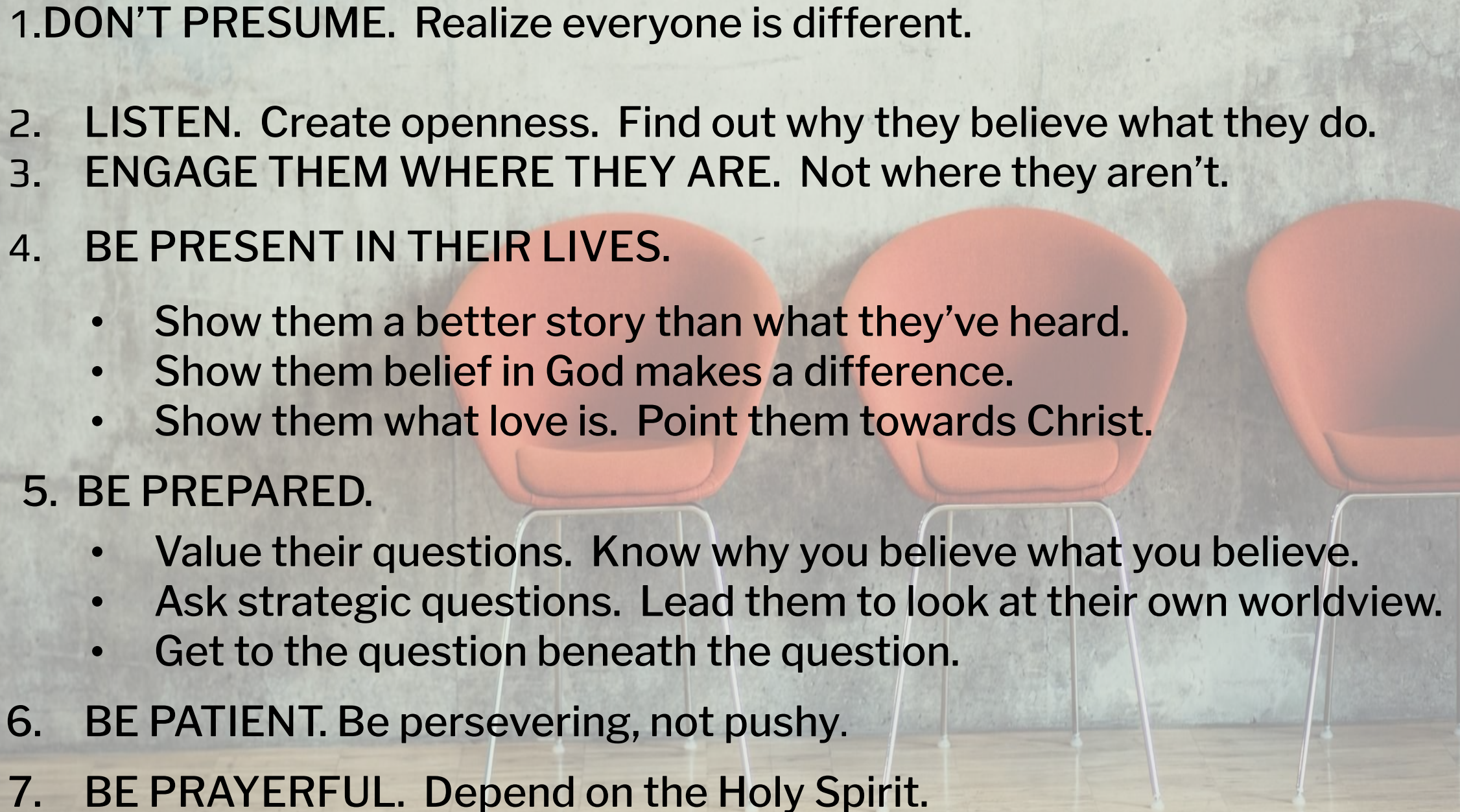


# SIDE B

## STORIES

How skeptics  
flip the record  
of their lives

with JANA HARMON

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- The background of the slide features three modern, orange-colored chairs with white metal legs, arranged in a row against a light grey, textured concrete wall. The floor is made of light-colored wooden planks. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.
- 1. DON'T PRESUME.** Realize everyone is different.
  - 2. LISTEN.** Create openness. Find out why they believe what they do.
  - 3. ENGAGE THEM WHERE THEY ARE.** Not where they aren't.
  - 4. BE PRESENT IN THEIR LIVES.**
    - Show them a better story than what they've heard.
    - Show them belief in God makes a difference.
    - Show them what love is. Point them towards Christ.
  - 5. BE PREPARED.**
    - Value their questions. Know why you believe what you believe.
    - Ask strategic questions. Lead them to look at their own worldview.
    - Get to the question beneath the question.
  - 6. BE PATIENT.** Be persevering, not pushy.
  - 7. BE PRAYERFUL.** Depend on the Holy Spirit.