

Session 3 - Tactics in Apologetic Conversations

9/16/18

- **Seeking 1st to Understand** - Knowing where they're coming from
- *"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."*
- You've got to be genuinely inquisitive seeking to find out what they think and why – No better way to do that than through questions.
- These interactions with people really need to be built on having prayed about the interaction first (or at least during). If the power behind my words is only my intellect, the conversation is probably going to be that proverbial hay and stubble that gets burned up.

- **Example questions/conversation starters** (conversations on these topics are not easy to start and take practice. These ideas should help you do that.):
 - **What do you think about...?**
 - **What is your background spiritually?**
 - **What's the last good book you've read?**
- Their common response: **What about you? -Always have an interesting book that you're reading that is a conversation starter.**
 - **I was listening to a discussion on Youtube (or reading an article) the other day by a PhD biologist and he said something pretty interesting...**
 - **I saw on the news that ... what do you think about that?**
 - **I heard a presentation recently on evidence for the existence of God that was really interesting because it didn't come from a biblical perspective, just scientific.**
 - **Asking about someone's tattoo**
 - **If someone is from(or familiar) with another culture, asking them about an aspect of that culture.**
 - **Having people ask you about the RDOF shirt you're wearing**
 - **"I was reading a book about astronomy the other day and the author made a really interesting point about..."**
 - **Leave a book out on your desk/coffee table that has a title that is a conversation starter.**
 - **When people ask you "What's new?" or "What have you been up to lately?" be ready to tie in something you've been doing/reading/learning related to apologetics.**
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- **Motive**
- We've got to be doing this for the right reason. What are some of the right reasons to be having these types of conversations?
 - Many of us would want a person to be able to be in a position in which they can see the plausibility of the Christian world view and that the Christian world view has both explanatory scope and explanatory power and is entirely rational.
 - We may just value helping those around us think correctly about the nature of reality that we live in, and that's reason enough.
 - Without love we're a clanging gong.(1 Cor 13:1-3)
 - Golden Rule: Treat others as you would want to be treated.

- **Introspection**

Realize most people have NOT done two important things up to this point

- Thought through the real reasons for their position (if there are any)
- Verbalized that position in detail to anyone

- **Two Barriers**

- Example (bad) dialogue:

Non-theist: I just don't believe in God.

Theist: You should believe in God. There is a lot of evidence. You've got the scriptural evidence, the archeological evidence, the cosmological evidence, the prophetic evidence, and a lot of evidence from both science and philosophy, so the evidence is really just overwhelming and really, it's just irrational for you to not believe in God.

Non-theist: Well, ...I don't know about all that.

Theist: It should be convincing to you. Why don't you believe in God? I just don't get it.

Non-theist: I don't know... I think it has something to do with how I grew up. (pause) My dad was a pastor that always preached Jesus to us but got drunk every day but Sunday and ...hit my mom a lot.

Theist: ...Oh.

- There are two types of barriers that people have and if you don't take the time to figure out which one you're dealing with, there's a very good chance you'll be frustrated and may waste some time (or worse as we saw in this case).
 - The first type is an intellectual barrier
 - What is an example of an intellectual barrier?
 - Perceived errors/inconsistencies in the Bible
 - Misconceptions about science/philosophy/faith
 - Someone whose academics taught them that the earth was of one age and their biblical understanding indicated a different age
 - Exposure to false biblical teaching
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 - The second type is an emotional barrier
 - What is an example of an emotional barrier?
 - Rude/hurtful Christians
 - Hypocrisy
 - Not wanting God to get in the way of desired immorality
 - Foolish Christians setting a bad example
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- **Invisible Target**
 - Be intentional about not expressing your opinion (at least initially)
 - We generally do this through asking questions
 - Dale Carnegie: Seek 1st to understand, then to be understood
 - Initially, be in 'trying to understand' mode (genuinely)
 - This keeps them uninhibited. If they think you disagree, what they say will change.
 - This keeps the conversation from shifting to a situation in which you're on the defense.
- **Backseat Driver** - The person you're talking to is being asked to give their opinion, so they think that they are directing the conversation, but you are actually wisely/gently/graciously guiding them another direction by your questions.
 - Helping those you're interacting with to draw the right conclusions.
 - Socrates: "I cannot teach anyone anything, I can only make them think."
 - People don't like being told what to do. They also don't like being told what to think. Thankfully there's a better way to lead people to the right conclusion – allow them to draw the conclusion themselves. Much better than you making the assertion.

- If you're trying to talk someone into something, they can spend a lot of effort trying to talk you out of it or just dismiss you. If your position hasn't even come up (Invisible Target) because you're allowing the conversation to be focused on them (which is what most people want anyway), you're positioned well.
- If they've talked themselves into something, if they decide they don't like where it led, they've now got an awkward conversation (with themselves) to have.
- So, exercise self-control in "gotcha" situations. Let them draw their own conclusions, keeping them intellectually honest.
- **A supplement, not a substitute** – Spoiler Alert: These methods are not a substitute for knowledge, they're a supplement to knowledge. You still need to know the basics of what your Bible says (and a some about science and rationality) and the more you know, the better off you are.
- **Dynamic Duo**
Having said that, we're going to talk about two questions that DON'T take a lot of background knowledge and don't put you in a position to have to defend your position. Don't underestimate the power of these two questions that you can effectively even if you have very little apologetics knowledge. Daryl has mentioned these some at his events. They are:
 - ***"What do you mean by that?"***
 - Often this will prompt someone to say more about something they haven't thought through as much as they thought they had.
 - This gives you a feel for what they really know about the topic.
 - ***"How did you come to have that position?"***
 - This causes a person to really examine both the basis of their belief and the validity of that basis.
 - This gives you time to see their rationality (or lack of rationality)
- **Mirror**
- Repeat back the claim you hear the person saying
- Be selective
- Look for statements that the person might be tempted to hedge on later or statements that are key to that person's argument, but that you can demonstrate are false.
- One of the effects is accountability, they'll usually be more careful in not overstating facts if they know you could mirror their statement back.
- Examples:

- “Are you saying that the move from non-life to life is trivial and that scientist have figured it out?”
- “Let me make sure I understand. Are you saying that there actually are a lot of transitional fossils in existence?”
- **Leave the Door Open**
- If you expect other opportunities to talk with the person, don’t feel compelled to go for the home run.
- Your goal is to:
 - Give them reason to pause
 - Give them reason to be humble (instead of dogmatic) about their position on the topic
 - Let them know you respect them and are genuinely interested in their point of view
 - Invite (and make them comfortable with) further conversation
- **Putting it Together**
Example dialogue (that integrates several things from this/previous sessions)
- **Sneak Attacks**
 - Be ready for these diversion tactics to be attempted
 - Burden of Proof – Their attempt to shift the spotlight
 - Personal Attacks – going after you and not the supporting evidence/argument (what did we call that?)
 - Sidestepping Rationality
 - When they respond: “It’s just wrong/stupid/bad/obvious”
(We don’t want to oppose these positions/assertions, we want to seek to understand them.
 - Slippery - When they attempt to change the topic when they see themselves getting backed into a corner. Stay on topic.
- **Secret Weapon**
- That secret weapon is that our worldview is actually true, so in the end, it’s going to be easier to defend.
- God’s revelation in nature is going to line up with His truth and is going to be more comprehensive and have more explanatory scope and power simply because it corresponds with reality.
- But the person you’re talking to doesn’t know they’re at a disadvantage. That’s ok, but it should give you confidence.

- **Put Into Practice (PIP)**
- Ok we're going to do a little PIP (put into practice) exercise. We're going to have you team up with the person next to you and pick one of two scenarios. One of you is a theist (one that believes in God) and the other is a skeptic or agnostic. Decide which you'll be. Then have the theist bring up the topic and use some of the techniques we went over today to interact with the skeptic. Skeptics, don't be too difficult, be polite.
- 2 Scenarios:
 - 1. You read in the news yesterday that scientists found water on a remote planet and they're pretty sure that means it'll have life on it (since some scientists think life just pops up (like mosquitos in The Woodlands) wherever water is). Engage the skeptic on this in what seems to you to be a productive way using the techniques.
 - 2. Use one of conversation starters in the bottom of page 1 to start your own conversation.
 - After you've spent 2 minutes talking, switch roles and the new theist can pick either of the two scenarios.
- **Don't Wait** – One thing you'll find is that there's always the temptation to learn a little more before you start engaging others. That delay can go on forever. I can tell you after studying for thousands of hours, I still don't feel anywhere close to adequate to do this.
 First, if I feel adequate then I guess I don't feel like I need God. That's not a good place to be.
 Second, and ironically, one of the main reasons that can lead to feelings of inadequacy to share is not a shortage of preparation, but a shortage of actually engaging others. Engaging in conversation on these topics increases your confidence in being able to do just that. Use the suggestions we gave you on the bottom of page 1 and think of some of your own.

 As long as you don't come across as a know-it-all, you won't have as much pressure on you to have all the answers.
- **Rubber Meets the Road (RMR):** Reread the 'conversation starters' section. Look for two opportunities in which you can start a conversation and incorporate any of the

points we covered. We'll be asking you in the next session to share one of conversation attempts.