

# LEARNING THE TACTICAL APPROACH TO PERSONAL INTERACTIONS #2

## Review:

Last time, we talked about our responsibilities as an ambassador to speak on behalf of Christ the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:20) Paul tells us that we need to make the most of every opportunity (Col 4:3-6) and that we have many opportunities each day to impact others for God's Kingdom.

How many of you took advantage of an opportunity to impact someone else for good since our last lesson?

We suggested that last time we often don't do anything because we're not sure what to do.

Last time, we suggested that you need to start by asking good questions. The question that we suggested as a first question was, "What do you mean by that?"

## Introduction:

Tonight we are going to look at the second step of the game plan.

- I. Reverse the "burden of proof"
  - A. What we mean is that the person who makes the claim bears the burden of proof.
  - B. In other words, if I claim something, then I need to be prepared to give reasons as to why I believe as I do.
  - C. But if you are just asking questions, you bear no burden of proof because you haven't made any claims.
  - D. For example, let's say you have a friend who believes in the Big Bang theory, and so you ask them, "What do you mean by that?"
    1. They begin to explain to you that something came from nothing and as a result, an explosion took place that began the process of evolution.
    2. The burden of proof is on your friend to give evidence to support their position.
    3. Be on the lookout for the phrase, "I can explain that." Just because a person can give a possible explanation does not mean it is reasonable. An alternate explanation is not a refutation. Not everything that is possible is reasonable. They need to show you why their view is more reasonable than your view.
  - E. The key question to put the burden of proof on the other person is, "How did you come to that conclusion? What are your reasons for that?"
  - F. You want to put the burden of proof on the person who made the claim.

G. Sometimes people may say, “I guess I don’t have any reasons; I just believe it.” To that you should ask, “Why would you believe something you have no reason to think is true?”

II. Examples of applying the two questions and reversing the burden of proof

A. Jesus was a mere man that people elevated to God.

1. What do you mean by that?
2. Why do you think that is the way it happened?

B. I was born a homosexual.

1. What do you mean by that? How do you know that?
2. How did you come to that conclusion? What evidence supports that

conclusion other than just feelings?

C. An embryo is not a person.

1. What do you mean by a person?
2. What evidence do you have that supports that claim?

D. Review the steps.

1. Step #1 deals with “what” the person thinks.
2. Step #2 deals with “why” do you believe.

III. The Professor’s Ploy

A. We have all heard stories of Christians who go off to secular colleges and encounter a professor who seems to want to destroy a Christian’s faith.

B. For example, let’s say your professor says, “I believe the Bible is just a book of fables.”

1. So you raise your hand and ask, “What do you mean by that?” And he says, “It was just made up by men, and it’s not the Word of God.”
2. So you ask the second question, “How did you come to that conclusion?”
3. At this point, the professor might call you out and say, “It sounds from your question that you believe the Bible is God’s Word. Why don’t you explain why you believe that.”

C. What did the professor just do? He just turned the burden of proof onto you even though you haven’t made any claims. You have just asked questions.

D. What is going on is that they made a claim: “The Bible is just a book of fables”, and they ask you to prove the claim wrong. This is reversing the burden of proof to you.

E. How should you respond to this tactic?

1. Rules of engagement
  - a. “Never make a frontal assault on a superior force in an entrenched position.” As a professor who is the “authority” in the class, he has a superior position to you.
  - b. Don’t get into a power struggle, especially not in front of a crowd.
2. Don’t take the bait.

3. You can say, "I haven't even shared my view. I am just trying to understand your belief & reasons for believing it." You don't have to answer them.
4. "You don't have to be an expert" to engage someone.
5. Remember our job is to plant seeds.
6. A good question is a powerful tool. The Holy Spirit can take a good question and humble a person and get them to really think.
7. What do you do if you don't know what to do?
  - a. You've asked both questions, and you don't know what to say next.
  - b. It is okay to let a conversation die.
  - c. As a result, you can do more research and gain more knowledge so that in the future you may know how to respond.

#### IV. Getting out of the hot seat

- A. Let's say they come back with all kinds of arguments as to why they believe as they do, and you don't know what to say or do. Right now, they are in the driver's seat.
- B. Conversational self-defense
  1. Shift from a persuasion mode to a fact-finding mode.
  2. Become a student
    - a. You could say, "It sounds like you know a lot more about this than I do. Tell me again what you believe and why you believe."
    3. After they are done sharing, you could say, "Let me think about it."
    4. This response gets you out of the pressure to respond.
- C. The key is to stay engaged and get back in the driver's seat by not feeling pressured to give a burden of proof when you didn't make any claims.

#### V. The example of Christ      Read Luke 20:2-8.

- A. The chief priests ask Jesus a question to challenge His authority (vs 2) because they saw themselves as the authority and in a position to judge Jesus.
- B. Jesus asks them a question about the authority of John the Baptist and their response to him. Verse 3: "John's baptism – was it from heaven or from men?"
- C. What did Jesus do? He reversed the burden of proof and put it back on the chief priests related to this issue of authority.
- D. The chief priests were not willing to acknowledge John the Baptist as having authority from God, and so they responded by saying, "We don't know where (his authority) was from."
- E. And so Jesus doesn't answer their question either.
- F. This example illustrates that we don't always have to answer someone's question. We need to be careful of the Professor's Ploy of trying to trick us and put the burden of proof on us. We need to keep the burden of proof on the one who is making the claim.

### Conclusion:

1. Ask the question: "What do you mean by that?"
2. Reverse the burden of proof. The person who makes the claim bears the burden of proof. So we ask, "How did you come to that conclusion? What are your reasons for that?"
3. Avoid the Professor's Ploy of having to give a burden of proof even though you didn't make a claim.
4. When you don't know what to do.
  - a. Let the conversation die, "Thanks for sharing with me."
  - b. Become a student and ask them to explain again what they believe and why.

### Application:

Look for ways in conversation to ask the two questions.

### Small groups:

1. Is it a scary thought to engage someone by asking them questions? Why/why not?
2. The second question was, "How did you come to that conclusion? What are your reasons for believing that?"

Why is this such a powerful question?

3. Have you ever been sucked into giving a proof for what you believe by someone who was not willing to give you proof for what they believed? What happened?
4. What can you do in the future to keep the burden of proof on them?
5. The whole point of this lesson is to give you a method to interact with unbelievers in a non-confrontational dialogue. What commitment will you make this week to apply this lesson?