

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. - Colossians 4:5-6

Think back to your elementary or high school days. What qualities made someone a good teacher? What qualities made them a bad teacher?

Like teachers, Christians should be in the business of changing minds. As we interact with our lost neighbors day-to-day, we should be sharing the truth with them through the power of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, sometimes as we share the truth, we turn the conversation into a lecture. As our speech loses its seasoning, we may lose the interest of the unbeliever.

Over the last couple weeks, we learned two tactics that can start a spiritual conversation with anyone. When someone says something about their beliefs, you should ask, “**What do you mean by that?**” After you learn what the person believes, you can then go further and learn why they believe it. Ask, “**How did you come to think that?**” to learn the root of their convictions. At this point, you have the resources you need to start introducing them to the truth, but you need to do it with grace.

Teaching the Receptive

Today, we’re going to look closely at two situations where Jesus is teaching. Jesus, the Son of God, knows all things—yet He frequently took time to ask His students questions. As any teacher knows, good questions force you to think.

1. When Jesus and His disciples return to Capernaum, what question do the tribute collectors ask Peter? (Matthew 17:24)

The tribute described in these verses was also called the “two-drachma tax” or the “temple tax.” Every year, Jewish men who wanted to show their patriotism to Israel would give two drachmas or half a shekel to help maintain the Temple and ceremonies. It was an optional tax, never demanded.

2. Why does Jesus stop Peter before they enter the house? (Matthew 17:25)

3. What is Jesus’ point in asking Peter that question? (Matthew 17:26)

Jesus wants to reveal a couple of things to his disciple. First, as the Son of God—the child of the King—Jesus is exempt from the duty of paying taxes, especially toward the upkeep of the Temple. Second, all those who have been brought into the family of God do not have to pay “tax” to Him—instead, what they give should be out of a spirit of gratefulness and generosity.

4. Despite the truth that He taught Peter, Jesus sends him to catch a fish, in which he would find the money to pay the tribute, so that they would not offend the collectors (Matthew 17:27)

In this situation, Jesus subtly corrects Peter's understanding. The disciple eagerly answered on Jesus' behalf, but he didn't have a complete grasp of Jesus' position. But instead of rebuking Peter, Jesus asks him a leading question that directed him toward the truth.

This is not to say that there is never a place for rebuke. As Paul tells Timothy, "Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). But as Jesus shows with the fish, we should not offend people unnecessarily. We must match our methods with the manner of Jesus Christ.

Teaching the Stubborn

When Jesus enters the Temple in Jerusalem, some chief priests and elders accuse Him of teaching things contrary to God's authority. In response, Jesus tells them several parables, asking questions along the way. As the stubborn religious leaders answer the questions, they actually become Jesus' accomplices in proving His point.

1. Summarize the parable that Jesus tells the religious leaders in Matthew 21:28-30 ____

2. In the parable, the first son that repented and obeyed represented the publicans and harlots that believed John's preaching, and the second son that pretended to obey represented the chief priests and elders that disbelieved John's preaching (Matthew 21:31-32)
3. What heart issue does Jesus reveal in the religious leaders by asking them the question about the brothers? Jesus was revealing their hypocrisy—they were faking obedience to God without intending to follow His will, even when it was revealed to them

As Jesus teaches with leading questions, He accomplishes two things. First, He makes sure that the religious leaders **understand** the point that He's making. Second, Jesus makes sure that they **agree** with His point. In this situation, He makes sure that the leaders understand and agree that acting like you are obeying is not actually obeying.

4. Jesus' question prepares the religious leaders for His next point: after watching the publicans and harlots believe John's righteous message, they "repented not afterward, that [they] might believe him" (Matthew 21:32)

In the parable, neither the first son nor the second son was without sin. The first son needed to repent of his initial rebellion, like the publicans and harlots whose lifestyles were openly against God's Law. The second son, on the other hand, needed to repent of his inward rebellion, like the scribes and chief priests whose hearts were against God's Law

Tactic 3 - "Have you considered this?"

The first two tactics we learned helped us gather information and start a spiritual conversation. Both questions—"What do you mean by that?" and "How did you come to think that?"—do not require you to put your own beliefs on the line. The next tactic, however, is somewhat trickier. We will ask leading questions that advance the conversation toward the gospel without inviting hostility. This tactic requires us to identify a flaw in the unbeliever's beliefs and approach it with a question that might begin with, "**Have you considered this?**"

1. Why is the message of the gospel—Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection—so important for everyone in the world? *We are all born dead in trespasses and sins, and we deserve God's wrath. Jesus is the only way for us to be saved from the punishment of our sin and be given the hope of heaven and a relationship with God for the ages to come.*

Teachers, feel free to reference Ephesians 2:1-7 as you discuss this question. If it were not for our sin and the severity of God’s wrath, the gospel would not be so exceedingly precious.

The first type of leading questions helps unbelievers understand **why** Jesus is the only way before telling them **that** He is the only way. If they say they think Christians are “intolerant” or “believe everyone who doesn’t believe just like them is going to Hell,” you have an opportunity to ask a series of questions in a friendly, conversational way:

1) Have you considered whether people should be punished for committing moral crimes? 2) Have you ever committed moral crimes? 3) Do you want to know how Jesus solves the problem for us?

2. How do we know that good works cannot save us from our sins? Can you list multiple Bible references that teach this truth?

Teachers, since you’re already in Ephesians 2, feel free to focus on verses 8-9.

The second type of leading questions focus on what unbelievers already know, like Jesus did for Peter. For example, if you learn they think God will accept them into heaven because they’ve done more good things than sins, you can ask them some other questions:

1) Have you considered what God considers goodness? Do you think you’re as good as God wants you to be? 2) Even when you do good things, does that ever make the bad things you’ve done disappear for you or anyone else? 3) What makes you think that God—who knows everything—would choose to ignore your sins?

3. What did Jesus say about the truth in John 8:31-32?

A final type of leading questions exploits a flaw in the person’s beliefs, like Jesus did with the religious leaders. By pointing out something that they might not have considered, you will help them to question their own thinking and bring them close to the truth. For example, they might say that since truth is relative everyone should just believe and do what feels right to them—“You do you.” But since you know that Jesus is “the Truth” (**John 14:6**) you can ask them the following questions:

1) Have you considered that your own statement must be either right or wrong? 2) If your statement can be proven right or wrong, doesn’t that mean that—when it comes to what you’re saying—truth isn’t actually relative? 3) Instead of brushing Jesus off as something that other people believe, wouldn’t you like to know whether or not what He said is true?

Being Ready

Most of the time, asking “Have you considered this?” requires some work beforehand. Peter wrote to some Jewish Christians that they needed to “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (**1 Peter 3:15**).

What is one way that you can prepare in advance for gospel conversations that you might have? _____

You could anticipate what might come up, and do research if you think someone might mention something that you’re unsure of. You could think about conversations that you’ve already had and try to think of good leading questions you could have asked in those situations. And you could brainstorm how you think people will respond to the questions you come up with.

Can you write down any situations in this week where you will have an opportunity start a gospel conversation? _____

This Saturday at 10:30 AM, we will be having our Gospel & Company ministry. All are invited to come for about an hour of knocking on the doors of people in our community, inviting them to our church, and starting gospel conversations if possible.

This lesson was adapted chapter 5 of Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions by Gregory Koukl.