

# On Becoming a Conversant Christian

2 Timothy 3:13-17

**Proverbs 19:25** - Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

**Proverbs 27:5** - Open rebuke is better than secret love.

**Proverbs 27:6** - Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

**Proverbs 27:17** - Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

**Ecclesiastes 7:5** - It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

## Book recommendations and acknowledgement:

Jimenez, Jason. "Challenging Conversations: A Practical Guide to Discuss Controversial Topics in the Church." Baker Books, 2020.

Lutzer, Erwin W. "We Will Not Be Silenced: Responding Courageously to Our Culture's Assault on Christianity." Harvest House Publishers, 2020.

You say, "I don't like/want to talk about religion or politics."

- What will you talk about?
- When and where will you talk about these matters?
- What about the next generation?

## Three common excuses:

1. Ignorance - "I'm not smart enough." "I don't know what to say."
2. Defensive - "I get too defensive/worked up."
3. Discomfort/fear - "I get too uncomfortable."

The big problem with these excuses is that they can lead you either to attack (an Aggressor) or to shut down (an Avoider). We must learn to become an Advocate of God's Truth.

<b>Aggressor</b>	<b>Advocator</b>	<b>Avoider</b>
1. A Controller	1. An Exhorter	1. An Enabler
2. Tends to Dominate	2. Tends to Converse	2. Tends to Dodge
3. Attacks people/ideas	3. Engages with people/ideas	3. Dodges people/ideas
4. Characterized by demeaning/disparaging	4. Characterized by persuasion	4. Characterized by passivity
5. Speaks down to others	5. Speaks up for truth	5. Speaks around the issue
6. Mocks questions	6. Asks questions	6. Avoids questions
7. Passes Harsh judgment	7. Practices Self-judgment	7. Fears any judgment
8. Seeks correction in the conversation	8. Seeks meaningful conversation	8. Seeks to avoid the conversation
9. "You don't know what you're talking about."	9. "Can you help me better understand your position?"	9. "I don't want to talk about this."

Three qualities/characteristics of becoming an Advocate of God's truth.

## **I. Listen First: Relate to the person - Personalize the conversation**

We usually approach challenging "conversations" with guns blazing in an attempt to straighten the other person out. When has that ever worked?

**Proverbs 18:19** - A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

You will accomplish nothing by making the other person mad. No one responds to attacks or insults. (p. 31.1)

Suggestions:

- Set a tone of safety and civility
- Build rapport
- Be careful what you say

**Matthew 15:18** - But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart;

**Romans 12:10** - Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

**1 Peter 2:17** - Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

- Be careful how you say it
- Be present

**Proverbs 18:13** - He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

- Be humble/vulnerable

## **II. Ask Questions: Investigate their views - Analyze the conversation**

- Understand people's differences
- Make adjustments

## **III. Summarize: Translate what was said - Harmonize the conversation**

Conclude by considering three questions:

- What did we learn?
- Where do we agree?

"There are therefore no foolproof methods of persuasion, and those that come closest are coercive and dangerous because they override the will rather than convince the mind." Os Guinness

- Where do we go from here?

Questions to ponder:

- What is stopping you from engaging in challenging conversations?
- What do you think might change if the church, as a whole, was willing to have challenging conversations?
- Do you tend to be an aggressor or an avoider in challenging conversations? What are some steps you can take to become an advocate instead?
- Are you generally willing to be open and vulnerable in conversations, or do you tend to act closed off? What are ways you can move toward "going first" and being vulnerable in conversations?