M20A1 Leading Questions

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Chapter 1 Leading Questions

The Christian apologist is often most comfortable with affirmations and uncomfortable with interrogations. The lecturer seems OK with the word interrogation. I unfortunately see the word enshrouded with the intention to harm you (or me). Police sometimes interrogate with the intention to trap you with your own words, seeking to pin the crime on someone and mainly trying to get their task completed. I don’t think the Christian apologist should seek to harm or embarrass their opponent. I don’t see how this conditions the opponent to recognize the still voice of God speaking to him when he confuses Christianity with the apologist who seeks to embarrass him.

Note that I don’t think the lecturer intends to say that we should attempt to embarrass those we debate with. But that’s the connotation the word interrogation comes with when I hear the word.

The lecturer wants us to be unwilling to immediately accept the dismissing shrug of the shoulder followed by such words as “I am not convinced”. Asking leading questions that we’re sure our opponent is likely to agree with eliminates this easy shrug of the shoulder. He must concede something, perhaps. Or at least permit the audience to recognize the inadequate reasoning of our opponent.

The lecturer has consistently used the expression “leading questions” throughout this series of courses. And he quickly reverts to this usage. Which is good for me.

What Are Leading/Non-Leading Questions?

Discussions and debates generally default to trying to establish my viewpoint as truth, no matter how much or little evidence I may have accumulated. This can trip up the apologist as well. We need to be prepared, as the lecturer has repeatedly said.

Often our opponent doesn’t seek truth. He simply wants to forcibly make his contrary opinion known. And he is satisfied with walking away with his final words “I’m not convinced.” The lecturer here reverts to the expression **cross examination**. In a formal group debate this may well be appropriate. In informal debate with a small audience I’d prefer directing my leading questions to the remaining audience. Or one on one come back to the discussion with a friend on another occasion. The technique can be used less confrontationally.

Cross examination depends on questions. In courts of law the prosecutor and defense attorney are the debaters, the judge presumed to be an impartial mediator (not sure this would be an accurate description, arbiter might be better). The jury is the audience tasked with determining the truth. In criminal court the standard is high while in civil court it is just 51% confidence in truth.

This differs in religious debate. There is no mediator or arbiter. And the debaters speak directly to each other rather than indirectly through witnesses. Even high school debates are fairer than religious debates. Also, high school debates are conducted more to the standard of civil trials (preponderance of evidence).

In apologetics, leading questions seek to lead to truth. Sometimes sophisticated questions can sound good without actually getting us closer to truth. These would be non-leading questions. Sometimes debaters simply pile on a load of questions that serve, intentionally or not, to simply confuse the issue and muddy the waters to make truth hard to reach. The apologist should listen to experienced apologists to learn how to progressively ask leading questions that unambiguously arrive at truth.

The Need For Asking Leading Questions

Leading questions **conserve time**. They prevent being sidetracked, separating essential from trivial.

Leading questions **aim at** the intended goal, **a definite direction**. I would disagree about an authoritative chairman stifling discussion without members being allowed the freedom to subtly lead the committee to an alternate goal. The most powerful person on a committee gains by the ideas of the many to influence the final decision. The company gains by active participation. Otherwise the members know their role is to rubber stamp.

In apology, the Christian knows that there are two paths, two paths only. And the Holy Spirit can lead although will not coerce.

Leading questions seek to **get to the root of the issue**. “Only leading questions can expose the hidden assumptions and the root cause of the problem being discussed.” -lecturer

Leading questions **seek to convince the respondent**. Affirmations don’t typically convince. “Only leading questions can help the apologist to force the opponent to go through the steps needed to arrive at truth.” -lecturer

Chapter 2 - Types of Questions

1-Intelligence-Based Questions

No intelligence is needed to ask random questions. Children ask random questions because they don’t know the answers or truth. Goal oriented questions require insight and thus are Intelligence Based Questions.

*Inquiring questions* lead to the need for being asked and answering leading questions. Reasoning into complex issues requires a step by step approach process. I’m not likely to believe your affirmations just because you’re a so-called expert. If you only ask the tenth of ten sequential questions, I have no foundation to experience an *ah ha* moment.

Sometimes, maybe often, your opponent knows that he isn’t prepared for intelligent analysis. *Misguided questions* may be used to confuse and avoid the moment of truth.

*Loaded questions*, like guns, are judicially used to kill the discussion. The Pharisees asked the loaded question to Jesus about paying taxes. A simple **yes** would have antagonized oppressed Jews chafing under the occupation. A **no** would have antagonized the Roman occupiers. Unless the Christian apologist learns to recognize loaded questions and have gentle answers ready, the audience will turn against him.

In a court of law, I’m not sure witnesses can avoid yes or no answers. But informally, we can as long as we can keep the audience sympathetic.

*Leading questions* intend to organize the flow of the argument. They help us concentrate on the aim of beneficial truth, as opposed to distracting evidence found in misguided questions. It takes discipline.

2-Intelligence Devoid Questions

Not all questions raised by your opponent or the audience are intelligent, reasonable or appropriate. No one is especially knowledgeable about all topics. Some questions are *irrelevant*. Questions not leading to an appropriate direction can be considered *intelligence devoid* and irrelevant.

Other questions may just serve to *confuse*. These lead us to directions off topic. Your opponent might prefer to talk about anything other than the topic at hand. He benefits by derailing a step by step procession to truth.

Chapter - 3 Why Do People Ask Wrong Questions

People often prefer to not learn the truth. “Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). People may ask the wrong questions because they wish to avoid truth.

People may ask the wrong questions

1-Because Of Human Stupidity And Blindness

As humans, we may be good at learning information but resistant to the conclusion that information leads us to. People often resist seeking or accepting ultimate truth. “Only appropriately asked leading questions can help people to see that their human thinking is not the answer to ultimate questions.” -lecturer

2-Because Of Spiritual Stupidity And Blindness

Prior to the Protestant reformation, the Roman church dictated not only beliefs but also politics. Only the priests were thought to be qualified to teach ultimate truth, explanations of scripture. Kings were disciplined when resisting local or Roman bishops. Sometimes to punish kings, priests were prohibited to marry individuals anywhere in the kingdom. This of course resulted in non-sanctioned family relationships. The citizens wished to coerce the king to submit to Romish dictates.

The Protestant reformation led initially to greater freedom. Congregants could study the Bible themselves. For a while freedom grew. But the Protestant reformation plateaued. Luther, Calvin, other reformers came to be studied equivantly to the Bible. Freedom stalled.

Moral living is needed to understand the Bible. The Bible can’t be fully appreciated or understood when studying from a human perspective. Even a seemingly spiritual person can be deceived by his self importance and perspective. He can cease to welcome ultimate truth.

3-Because Of Ignorance And Confusion

We don’t always or often see the complete picture. We aren’t always equally knowledgeable about the interconnecting subject to recognize ultimate truth. We think we know more than we do. Man’s wisdom isn’t the Lord’s. 1 Corinthians 3:19

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”

4-Because Of Deliberate Deceptions

Sometimes people ask the wrong questions, not because of human or spiritual immaturity or out of ignorance, but straightforwardly to deceive. Only leading questions can come close to forcing this dishonest debater to blunder and fold.

“Man by nature has a greater love for DARKNESS than for light. He will use all the arsenal at his disposal to dodge the truth.” - lecturer Leading questions can expose falsehood.

Chapter -4 Formulation of Leading Questions

Asking questions may be easy. But leading questions aimed to arrive at a resulting conclusion take planning. We have to learn the process. “Much training is required in the fundamentals of theology, logic, science, philosophy, and many other fields before an Apologist can successfully formulate Leading Questions.” -lecturer

In asking leading questions we also must learn to deflect sidetracking questions. In our humanness, people easily lose track of the intended direction of the discussion.

How To Frame Leading Questions

Only experience and insight helps. We need practice to effectively ask leading questions. Asking leading questions takes a lifetime commitment.

Questions dealing with holiness, righteousness, personal responsibility, choices and consequences, personal discipline, personal obligation are responded to differently by persons relying on human understanding as opposed to those responding from biblical insight. Even a believer doesn’t quickly grasp the full meaning of salvation. This comes to us only through a life of commitment and honor given to the Savior. It comes only as we let him change our minds and actions according to the principles he infuses into us.

Romans 12:1, 2 reminds believers to be "transformed through the RENEWING of their minds". Only as we learn to think rightly can we successfully lead others to Christ’s ultimate truths. The apologist must become a dedicated student of the Bible.

“Only the Scripture can give an in depth and realistic account of human nature and behaviour.” -lecturer We learn about the nature of both God and man through reading scripture. We see this through the stories of evil persons in the Bible and through seeing how God responds to draw the best out of faithful persons of faith who nevertheless sin and err, falling short of God’s love and perfection. Some atheists come to God when they see the Bible doesn’t paper over sins of leading persons following God. The only sinless person in the Bible is Jesus although we see no mention of sin in the brief portrayal of Enoch.

And the story of Daniel depicts no sin although Daniel includes himself in prayer for forgiveness of God’s people Israel. “We have not listened to your servants the prophets, … we are covered with shame … You have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.” (Daniel 9:6-7)

There is so much cultural diversity today in the USA. We must be careful to express ourselves in language that has meanings to other people groups without unintentionally offending or misleading them. This is becoming more difficult. Christians are often shut down over Satan’s redefinitions of love and hate. The Bible was recently removed from a public school district over this changing perceptions of love and hate. I see myself almost without a group over these issues because I sympathize with both groups and don’t feel fully belonging to either. The road to heaven is narrow with many side streets to the broad way that our human senses say make sense.

The lecturer gives the example of hurting beds. I imagine it is easy to misspeak when in multicultural conversations. And more and more we live in a multicultural society. Of course, heaven will initially be a multicultural place. God’s people must learn to live as one family.

The apologist must elicit verbal responses. Doing so, we know whether our discussion is going in the right direction. We know the respondent can’t easily backtrack after verbally agreeing at each step. And with verbal responses the responsibility in accepting truth lies with the respondent.

Examples Of Leading Questions

1-Do you firmly believe in what you have stated ?

2-If yes, then please give me some concrete proofs !

3-If you have no concrete proofs, how can you be so firm in your beliefs ? 4-Do you know that beliefs without sufficient proofs are called blind dogmatism ?

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1-What habit(s) of yours aggravated the problem?

2-What have you done so far to solve the problem yourself?

3-What are you going to do now (specially after this person accepts his wrong/sinful involvement)?

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1-What is the present condition of your spiritual life? 2-How is your prayer

life?

3-Are you enjoying intimacy with God these days?

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1-Do you mean that you CAN'T do that or that you are NOT WILLING to try or pay the cost?

2-Did he say that to build up, create harmony, due to his brotherly love, due to his concern, etc?

3-Am I (you) doing, speaking, or choosing it out of competition, for status, for ego, etc?

4-Does this action, attitude, phenomenon contribute more to the solution or to the problem?

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1-Does it encourage wholeness, holiness, pure conduct, etc.?

2-Does it in its totality bring glory or shame to the Lord?

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1. How this module helped your studies?

I find questions 1, 2, and 4 to be closely equivalent.

Affirmations aren’t evidence. They don’t convince or convict.

2. What new lessons you learned?

It’s interesting to hear an Indian citizen say “geographically small country like India”. I think the lecturer compares his geography to his neighbor China. He sees nearly equal populations squeezed into a somewhat smaller territory. His personal space is smaller than that of a Chinese citizen. (I, in the USA with a larger land space and smaller population, am blessed with more personal space.) Only Russia, Canada, the United States, China, Brazil, and Australia are geographically larger than India. And only China has a population greater than India. Obviously we don’t always see ourselves as others see us. I read in my youth the book titled *The Ugly American*. Our society is split where half defend ourselves as generous, respectful and spiritual while the other half describes our ugliness to each other. We can recognize to a ***small*** extent Jesus’ parables of the sheep and goats.

3. Your critical evaluation on the topic. We mean what is the shortcoming you see in the text, your suggestions for improvement.

1. I don’t like the example of chairmen asking leading questions to quickly come to agreement on what the chairman wants. His perception of truth is personal and grandiose, centered on forcing his predetermined agenda. I would disagree about an authoritative chairman stifling discussion without members being allowed the freedom to subtly lead the committee to an alternate goal. The most powerful person on a committee gains by the ideas of the many to influence the final decision. The company gains by active participation. Otherwise the members know their role is simply to rubber stamp.
2. The lecturer seems OK with the word interrogation. I unfortunately see the word enshrouded with the intention to harm you (or me). Police sometimes interrogate with the intention to trap you with your own words, seeking to pin the crime on someone and mainly trying to get their task completed. I don’t think the Christian apologist should seek to harm or embarrass their opponent. I don’t see how this conditions the opponent to recognize the still voice of God speaking to him when he confuses Christianity with the apologist who seeks to embarrass him. Ultimately I don’t think the lecturer intends this harmful connotation. It is just my reaction.

(C) In chapter 4, I did not recognize the examples of leading questions. I may understand the first of five sets. The others seemed to more so belong to asking a person to commit to God, much like sermon appeals at the closing of the service in my church.

I had expected leading questions for such topics as creation. I mentioned step by step easing questions a couple of times in my summary of the lecture. Maybe I don’t really recognize your meaning of leading questions. These examples ‘‘seem more designed to bring converts to their knees in conversion or personal renewal.

4. How does this lesson help you?

Seek verbal responses when asking questions. Get step by step commitments.

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