



I had a couple of interactions this past week that reminded me how easy it is to let conversations be more like ideological counter punching contests and less like diplomatic discussions. You know that feeling I'm talking about; when you are more interested in getting your point across than you are in understanding the other person's point of view. Someone says something that you've studied about, and rather than take the time to clarify what they mean, you see this as your opportunity to dump some wisdom on them or counter with the rock solid defense you've worked up against their position. The problem here, though, is that by being so ready to punch back, you may be swinging at a target that isn't even there.

[The Ambassador model that we are to follow](#) has three components; knowledge, wisdom and character. Typically, as a new case maker, we start with knowledge. We've heard all the attacks against Christianity, and we are anxious to know the counter to those attacks. We want to know how to defend what we believe. We think of ourselves more like a boxer than an ambassador. We hit the gym, develop our reflexes, learn how to see a punch coming, and then learn how to counter it with our own attack.

[I've always considered myself a sheepdog](#) - someone who will drive off the wolves when they threaten the defenseless sheep. I detest bullies. Nothing makes my blood boil like when someone who has a superior position of strength, power, or knowledge uses it to take advantage of someone who is weaker than them. For better or for worse, I brought this trait to Christian case making as well. I know Christianity is true, and I know how much it is a part of my life. So, when I sense it under attack, or hear someone taking a particular view on something I've been studying up on, I often times get too excited to show off this great wisdom or defense that I've developed.

I walked away from Christianity shortly after I went to college. Mostly because I never heard Christians offering up intelligent defenses of what they believed when Christianity came under attack. It felt like reason and logic were on the side of the non-religious. But, once I discovered apologetics, that all changed. 1 Peter 3:15 tells us we have to be ready to give a defense for what we believe. And I was ready! Christianity needed a defender, and I am the guy for the job. I am prepared to throw up the shield of reason to defend what it is I believe. And I'm ready to fight back when called upon.

The problem with thinking of yourself as some sort of boxer or gladiator when you are defending your position is you tend to walk around in a heightened state of alert. You hear a key phrase about a topic like relativism, abortion, or inaccuracies regarding Jesus and you spring into action. But, sometimes, you are perceiving a threat that isn't there. Or at least doesn't need the type of response you come back with. Sometimes, we counter with a flurry



of blows when all the person did was take their hands out of their pockets.

This is why thinking of yourself as a warrior or fighter when defending the Christian world view is the wrong mindset. Using the knowledge we gain through study, we end up clobbering people with it instead of guiding them to the cross. The goal of arguing for Christianity isn't to win the argument; it's to clear away any obstacles that person may have.

If you watch the news, or follow your friends on social media, it's easy to see why things are so contentious these days. People tend to report on, or share, the worst examples "the other side" has to offer. So, it gets really easy to think everyone who disagrees with you is on the extreme end of the spectrum, when in all honesty, we are more alike than not in what we think.

Remember, when you are having a disagreement about something, you need to listen more than you talk. Your first instinct should be to ask questions. Let the other person develop what it is they are trying to say. What you find out pretty quickly is that people have rarely thought through their positions. They just spit party lines they have heard other people say. I know I did. That's why asking questions is an easy way to have a conversation. You don't have to do any of the work. Often times once you begin walking people through what they are saying, they will *really* be thinking through their positions for the first time.

Also, don't think of the questions you ask like you are laying a logical trap for them to fall into. You're not trying to catch them in an awkward position to work in a submission hold. You are asking questions because you care about them and want to know what they think.

[Dealing with disagreement can be hard](#). But, if you think of it more like the meaningful conversation that is, and less like a battle of wits, you will be able to keep up the attitude required to help make the case for the Christian world view.

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