



Recently, we discussed [3 reasons people will not agree with a truth claim](#) - they have rational reasons, they have emotional reasons, or they have volitional reasons. Now that we have a way to understand why people object, let's see how we can use that to deal with the roadblocks they have.

The thing about apologetics that attracts most of us who engage in it extensively is the stimulation of the mind. We spend the bulk of our apologetics study on the academic side - studying philosophy, history, and science in order to offer evidence or logical arguments for our position. We hope that every encounter will simply be an exchange of ideas and evidence with the best argument winning the day.

Where we (including me) fall flat sometimes is in accounting for the human nature side of argumentation. As much as we want to keep case-making solely inside the realm of reason and logic, this is almost impossible. People have emotions, people have baggage, and people have history. People come to the discussion with certain presuppositions that become hard barriers to overcome. All of these influence our interactions and discussions. And, if we hit a roadblock in our conversations, it's helpful to know how to keep them going and deal with these objections.

## How To Handle Rational Objections

On the surface, most objections appear to be on a rational basis. It isn't until you've had a little further discussion that you can determine if their rejections are rational or not. Are they open to having their mind changed? If so, you'll hear them say things like "huh, never thought of that before" or "I'll have to think about that a little more". People like this tend to be people who really *are* seeking the truth.

As much as we hate to be on the other side of this, if we are ourselves being truth seekers, we have to be open to the idea that we may be wrong on something. Maybe *I* haven't weighed both sides of an issue. Maybe the person on the other side of something has better reasons to believe what they believe that I have for what I believe. I know as I look back on the positions I hold, I tend to develop nuance to ideas over time. I, myself have to be open to having my mind changed or I'm falling into one of the other categories of objection myself.

## How To Handle Emotional Objections

When I first got into apologetics as a way to share the gospel with others, I can remember getting really frustrated when people would not admit that I was right even when the



evidence on my side was overwhelming. I thought I was going to step into the conversation, drop a truth bomb, and it would be in the bag for me. It was like this in my personal relationships with other day-to-day issues as well. When my wife would worry about things, my initial strategy was always to give her enough reasons to show the thing she was worried about wasn't a big deal, thinking she would stop worrying. This works sometimes, but a lot of the time, it didn't make a difference. No matter how strongly I pointed out her worries were irrational, she still worried.

As I spent time engaging with people who differed with me, I started picking up on some of the things J. Warner Wallace said about having other reasons besides the rational kind for rejecting a truth claim. Emotions are real things that cannot be as easily tossed aside as we wish they could sometimes. Too many people have suffered tremendous pain - even abuse - at the hands of Christians. Imagine being one of Ravi Zacharias' victims, and being told that God had given you to him as a gift for faithful service. Or, imagine someone who had been beaten and abused by their father all of their life, suffered real trauma, and at the center of Christianity is the Father with whom you are to have a relationship. I think that would be hard to do for some people given their history with fathers.

One of the main objections we have to deal with today doesn't have to do with science or history or mistrust in the Bible. It's the problem of evil and suffering. And, when it comes to this objection, it's not usually rationality getting in the way. It's usually an emotional response. When someone is suffering, they usually won't be comforted with some 4 step logical proof on why you need God in order to even call things right or wrong. That approach isn't comforting at all.

When emotions become a barrier, that is the time to do what Job's friends should have done and just listen. Oftentimes, people will forget the words you have said, but they will remember your presence during that time in their life. My Mom passed away a few years ago. I don't remember a single word of comfort anyone gave me. I don't remember anything the pastor said during the service. But, I remember the people who were there. I don't find any comfort in their words now, but I do find comfort in remembering their presence in a time when it was needed.

Sitting back and listening can be really hard for me to do because I've spent a lot of time studying the issues and being able to spot logical fallacies in order to provide answers. I'm also a problem solver at heart, so my immediate urge is to give them a solution to their problem. With emotional issues, this is often the wrong first step. It was a hard lesson for me to learn; that I didn't need to immediately offer up an answer to their issue. In fact, it can come off as dismissive. If I answered too quickly, it came off sometimes like the problem



they were facing wasn't a big deal, they should just get over it. What I learned was that patience, compassion, *listening* - these have to come first.

A lot of hot-button topics of the day traffic heavily in emotional response and very little in rational justification. Politicians and the news tend to make an emotional appeal to move us one way or the other rather than give us reasons we may have to think about. And, when I see people reacting emotionally, it's really easy for me to dismiss their objections. But, whether or not someone's emotions are justified at that time isn't the point. The point is that they have them. And they are real. And the only way to get past those is for me to listen a lot more than I talk or offer advice.

This kind of engagement is particularly difficult on the internet when you're talking to someone you don't know. There isn't that ability to engage in true, meaningful conversation - only to trade barbs back and forth with one another. It's really difficult to learn the history of someone and how it influences the things they believe when all you get to hear are their objections.

If you think about it, though, for people who are dealing with strong emotional objections, the gospel is the thing they need the most. It's what will heal them from whatever pain they are suffering from. But, don't let your urgency to get them there turn this person into another problem to solve or argument to defeat.

## How To Deal With Volitional Objections

Dealing with people who have volitional objections is a little different. Again, your primary tactics here are patience and friendship - not necessarily the constant debating of topics. Through your friendship and the observation of your character, chances are there will be plenty of opportunities to drop a little nugget here and there; to put a stone in their shoe as [Greg Koukl](#) would say.

I know about this type of objection because it was the primary thing keeping me from following Jesus. Sure, I had what I thought were good reasons and objections. But, the truth is they were a smokescreen so that I could feel more empowered to do things the way *I* wanted to do them.

Remember, [most people don't go from unbelief to belief immediately](#). I know I didn't. When I look back at the road that got me to Christianity, I see *several* key events and not just one. Apologetics was part of that, but it wasn't one single argument that convinced me Christianity was true. In fact, it wasn't *just* arguments alone that did it. It was arguments,



some personal challenges I was going through, a few timely conversations, and the good character of some of the Christians in my life. It took all of that - not just arguments and rational thought - before I realized Christianity was true.

A lot of people will reject Christianity because they don't understand the problem. They think the role of religion is to teach people to be good to one another. A lot of religious systems are based on the "do good and you're in" model. And, if they see themselves as already being a "good person" without having to adhere to all the other religious stuff, they won't see the problem that we all face. Again, I know I didn't. Part of me thought I was "good enough" to get in. But, what I didn't see was that in the end, no one can be good enough on their own merits to stand in the presence of God. For that, I needed help.

The point is that people who willfully reject Christianity are often the hardest to reach. The best approach is to keep your relationship with them going and look for opportunities to share.

## **It's Not My Job To Save People**

Something that should give all of us a big sigh of relief is that it's not up to us to save people. Our unbelieving friend's salvation isn't our responsibility. Our part in this is just to present the truth with gentleness and respect. Until God does something to the unbeliever's heart, no amount of evidence, no amount of logic, reasoning, and argumentation will convince someone that Christianity is true.

Finally, something else I can do for my skeptical friend is to pray for them. Pray that God will work on my friend and put them in a place to be open to hear the truth. If they have some unresolved emotional issues that are keeping them back, I can pray for resolution and healing. And, I can pray that God will grant me the patience and character I need to be a part of that.