



Helping students think about apologetics

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"Question everything. Learn something. Answer nothing." - Euripides

I've no idea what Euripides really meant by that, but I know we all do have questions. University in particular is a time to ask questions and to find answers, and that goes for our personal and religious beliefs as well as our academic subject. Christian apologetics provides reasons for our beliefs - but how can we get that into the hands, eyes or ears of our student friends?

Answering the questions people ask

One way is through lunchbars that engage with the real questions that people ask - about suffering, about other religions, about science and Christianity. An engaging and knowledgeable speaker is a good start, but after the speaker has gone, what next?

"Learn something"

Follow Euripides' advice and prepare for questions - find out in your CU, youth group or homegroup what are the six most common questions people ask about Christianity. Then help each other prepare for the questions and practice answering them. You might want to hold a series of meetings to consider each question and how we can respond.

§ Find three articles on bethinking.org that cover the question

§ Work out some of the key points you would make in responding to the question

§ Think about whether you can ask questions

back - 'a conversation' rather than 'a sermon' (read 'Questioning Evangelism' by Randy Newman or listen to Conversational Apologetics)

§ At your group sessions

- ask the questions; practice how you respond; ask more questions; engage with each other

- have the bethinking articles available - put links to them on your CU website or Facebook § Then, at your lunchbars or evangelistic meetings

- address real questions

- have appropriate bethinking articles available

- have bethinking postcards to give out

- make it easy for people to follow links to further talks - offer to listen with them and make time for discussion

"Answer nothing"

But what about those who aren't interested? Our friends who just don't care? Who think they don't need God? You can't provide answers because they're not asking the questions! You need to start with helping them to identify their questions - then you can get into some real issues. So 'Answer nothing' is a temporary stage - while you decide together what questions are worth discussing.

You need to challenge the spiritual comfort zone of your friends, subvert their worldview (help them realise they've got one!) – but remember “with gentleness and respect”. Your friends listen to the same music, watch the same films, or read the same books as you. Lily Allen's Number 1 hit *The Fear* is on the radio. “Great song”, your friend remarks. What an opportunity to challenge! What do they like about it? Why? What is she really trying to say? What is her 'Fear'? Ask questions! It's a perfect opening to talk about some real issues. Whatever your common interests, they provide a bridge to ask questions that matter – and lead to answers that satisfy!

§ Bethinking.org and Damaris' Culturewatch website provide resources to explore our culture from a Christian perspective

§ Learn how to use popular culture to engage with your friends - listen to Andrew Fellows' talk “Movies and Apologetics” or Ted Turnau's "Using popular culture to reach Postmoderns"

§ Hold a film night, discuss a novel, or try a talk on an unexpected topic from popular culture that will appeal to those who wouldn't normally come to

a lunchbar

Tell us your own ideas, so we can share them on bethinking.org. Whether it's different ways to reach out to people, or material that you've found particularly helpful or recommendations for articles or talks to get onto bethinking.org.

Let us know what questions you've come up against that don't seem to be answered on bethinking.org. We'll try to find an answer for you.

We can help each other be confident in our faith and persuasive in our evangelism.

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