

Should you challenge your teacher or professor?

(Part 1)

Much of our educational experience consists of sitting in a classroom, listening to details about a particular subject, and regurgitating those specifics on an exam so we can eventually get a job at which point we feel “real life” begins.



Most of the time you don't really care if some famous person in history contracted the measles when they were seven or if it was actually when they were eight. It just doesn't really matter to you and rarely, if ever, do you question whether or not what you're being taught is correct.

However, there certainly are exceptions, particularly when it comes to the Christian worldview. A significant amount of what is routinely taught in our public schools and state universities is in direct contradiction to what we learn from God's Word. So, what is a student to do when confronted with these teachings? Should they just let it go? Should they physically stand up in class and call out the errors? Are they “sinning” if they don't? Many young people struggle with these situations, so in this brief article, I will simply share some practical and hopefully helpful advice.

This counsel is certainly not a “one size fits all” scenario. The appropriate response is somewhat related to the individual's personality and certainly their age and level of spiritual maturity.

Let me start by sharing how NOT to respond.

I would never recommend interrupting the teacher or professor in the middle of class. What do I mean by interrupting? I am referring to interjecting your ideas in a manner that is disrespectful or unnecessarily disruptive. I am not saying you should never speak up in the middle of class, but you need to be careful with how you do so. It is often best to engage the teacher/professor with a question, as opposed to simply claiming they are wrong or by just espousing your contrary view. I'll talk more about this a bit later in the article.

In addition to being rude, inappropriate disruptions most often lead to making things much worse. Even in the case where the Christian student is correct about their point, it will almost never lead to the teacher/professor humbly saying, “Thank you for pointing that out. I didn't realize I was wrong, and I appreciate you enlightening me and the entire class.” Believe it or not, teachers/professors are human, and they all struggle with pride, as we all do. They will often respond by lashing out at the student, belittling them in front of their classmates. Even if the teacher/professor cannot refute the particular point being raised, it doesn't matter. They can easily bring up a whole host of other issues which will appear to be huge challenges to the Christian faith. Most likely, the objecting student will not have answers to those issues and wouldn't be given time to address them even if they did. The

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result? The Christian student is publicly humiliated and will probably never speak out again. They may feel embittered and not too happy with God that He allowed this to happen. They may even begin to question their faith and perhaps walk away altogether.

So, what's a better approach? I would strongly suggest the following.

Anytime something is presented in class that the student feels is contrary to God's Word, they can then approach their teacher/professor outside of class, making an appointment if necessary. If at all possible, I would suggest bringing a friend along, just as a secondary witness. That way the teacher/professor will probably be somewhat on their best behavior because there's a "witness" in attendance. The student can then mention whatever topic was discussed in class and simply ask for clarification. They can ask something like, "What exactly did you mean when you stated such and such?" Or, "You mentioned that chemicals came together to form a living cell. Help me understand that better. How did that actually happen? How do they know it happened? What evidence do they have?" Or, "You mentioned the Bible is filled with errors and contradictions. Could you give me a few examples?" You want to do all of this very graciously and not with an attitude or any condescension.

If they do actually give you further detail (e.g., examples of errors and contradictions), don't feel you need to respond directly or refute anything then and there. Simply thank them for taking the time to help you better understand and then—do your homework! By this, I mean talk to your pastor or contact an apologetics ministry, like, oh, I don't know... ours! Once you have some answers, you could make a follow-up appointment during which you say something like this. "Thank you for taking the time the other day to help me better understand what you were sharing in class. I found what you told me to be very interesting, so I did some further research and here's what I found. I can summarize it for you, but I will also leave these brief articles with you in case you're interested." This approach is very respectful and non-inflammatory. Does this mean the teacher/professor will respond very kindly with an appreciative attitude? Not hardly. They may, but more often than not, they will be a bit upset, and depending on their personality and their past experiences, they might respond very caustically. You still need to engage very respectfully, none-the-less.

You've planted a seed and need to trust God to work His will in His timing. That's certainly no guarantee that things will turn out all bright and cheery. It could even lead to increased hostility towards the student, but that's just a normal part of taking a stand for the Christian faith. Ultimately, we trust God to help those situations strengthen our own faith and help us be even better positioned for future encounters. I have so many personal stories, but space prevents me from sharing. They are all part of making me who I am today.

We don't have to be perfect, polished, and have all the answers. We just need to be available and in continual growth mode, learning more and more about our faith.

Are there exceptions to this approach? Certainly! The overarching principle is to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, as opposed to something like looking at your cheat-sheet to see how you are to respond in a particular situation. We want to be Christ-like examples in all we do, especially when confronting error.

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I know we're just scratching the surface, so we'll go into a bit further detail in part 2 of this article.

If you have any further questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)