

Just your interpretation?



I enjoy witnessing to people, especially when it's someone who is either sincerely interested or fairly dogmatic about their skepticism. Either way, the conversation can be a lot of fun.

One instance that comes to mind involves someone I met at the gym at least 20-25 years ago. He was a staunch atheist and still is, but he's a very likeable guy. We had lost touch over the years, having joined different health clubs for a while, but we ended up at the same place again.

The first time I saw him after it had been a few years, he came up to me and said, "Preacher man! Ya saved anyone lately?" I said, "Well, I'm certainly always working on it!" We both laughed and had a good time reconnecting. We are very different. He's more of a rough-cut biker guy, and I'm, well... not! However, we really enjoy talking (as long as it doesn't interrupt our workout too much). I've learned a lot from our friendship over the years. Two things are very clear:

1. He doesn't want to talk about God.
2. He keeps bringing up the subject! 😊

I told him long ago that I would not force the subject on him, but if he were ever interested, I'd be willing to discuss things anytime he wanted. Interestingly, he never wants to talk about it but brings it up every time. Of course, whenever I respond to his initial comments, he reminds me he doesn't want to talk about it. Over the years, he's shared a fair amount regarding what he *doesn't* believe, but oddly, he's never wanted to tell me what he *does* believe. I understand why. If he laid out what it is he truly believed, he would be open to pushing back against those claims and be expected to be able to offer a defense. He's playing it safe, and I often let him.

Not too long ago, he once again brought up God and "religion" in general. I took the opportunity to explain very briefly the main difference between Christianity and "religion." Religion, as I have written about before and discussed in our videos, is man's idea of God, while Christianity (and the Bible specifically) is God's idea of God. Then I mentioned how important it is to be able to determine if the Bible truly is the Word of God, as it claims. I told him I could write a book making claims similar to those of the Bible. The problem is that I could not back up those claims. The Bible, on the other hand, gives us clear ways of testing its claim of inspiration. I mentioned 4 categories of evidence:

1. Internal Consistency
2. Historical Accuracy
3. Prophetic Accuracy
4. Scientific Accuracy

(I cover these in great detail in my free 5-part video series entitled, [The Inspiration of the Bible.](#))

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I told him that prophecy is arguably the most powerful line of evidence regarding the Divine inspiration of Scripture. I quickly gave an overview of the Bible's prophetic content, stating that there are over 8,000 prophetic passages making over 700 predictions, and it has a 100% successful track record!

Here was his response, and this is the tie-in to our Question of the Month. With a great deal of arrogance and self-confidence, he said:

“Well, it's all about how you interpret it!”

Boom! He got me, right? So, what did I say in response? It may surprise you. I agreed with him! However, I took his argument even further. I said, “You're right, it really does depend on how you interpret it. So, how do you interpret it?” He hesitantly said, as he was physically turning away from me, “Well...” And that's all he had to say. Then, I went on briefly to explain more about the importance of proper interpretation.

Knowing my time was short (because my past experience with him told me he was about to shut this whole thing down), I quickly transitioned into sharing the Gospel message. I was as brief and succinct as possible. I wish you could have seen him at that point. Keep in mind, this is a guy who has been loud and brash in every conversation we've ever had (in a fun, passionate way). For the first time ever, he was completely silent! He stood facing away the whole time, motionless, staring up at the 20-foot-high ceiling. There have been a few times in my life when I could physically feel the Holy Spirit convicting someone right in the middle of our conversation, and this was one of them. It was priceless. I wrapped it up and told him I didn't intend to pressure him but was merely responding to his comments. I reminded him I would never push anything on him, and he said, “And that's why we're still friends. I appreciate that!” I also told him I would pray for him, and he stunned me by saying, as sincerely as humanly possible, “Really? Thanks!” Not bad coming from an atheist.

That's a lot of background just to address the actual Question of the Month, which means I need to be especially brief with the rest of this article.

When people say, “Well, that's just your interpretation,” they generally do so to shut down the argument because they don't have a legitimate response. It's not as if they have a very different interpretation and are able to articulate and defend it. They just don't want to accept what you are sharing, and their response (“That's just your interpretation”) has worked for them in the past.

Yes, proper interpretation is critical. So, let's have a legitimate discussion regarding interpretation and not just accept “That's just your interpretation” as a valid counterargument in lieu of a coherently constructed line of reasoning.

I've had many legitimate discussions with people on the interpretation of Genesis 1-2 (and many other passages as well), where we've taken a deeper look at the actual Hebrew (or Greek) text. That can be a very fruitful exercise. While I'm at it, I guess I should admonish the reader not to use “That's

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just your interpretation” in any conversation yourself, unless you are willing to do diligence and further explore what the text actually conveys.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

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