

## Should you challenge your teacher or professor?

(Part 2)

Last month (in [Part 1](#) of this question), I began to address how to approach a teacher or professor who is sharing views that are directly contradictory to what we learn from God's Word. However, I was not able to cover as much as I would have liked to, so in Part 2, we will continue the discussion.



First off, I want to emphasize that the teachers and professors are not trying to lie to their students. Can you find an exception? Sure, but those are not the norm, and they constitute a very small percentage. Typically, the teachers/professors are simply conveying the only thing they ever learned, and they honestly believe those things are true. Occasionally, they will mention that what is being covered is controversial or questioned by many experts, but too often, most of what is taught is expressed as unquestioned fact or "settled-science" in some cases, such as climate change/global warming. I share all of this to remind ourselves not to treat them as "liars," but as people who are sincerely teaching what they believe to be true.

So how should a student respond on a test when they disagree with the answer that is expected to a particular question? Let's say they come across a question such as, "How many years ago did the first living cell arise from non-living chemicals?" Here's a response I DO NOT recommend. "Zero years ago, because it never even happened! God created everything miraculously, just like the Bible says! I don't believe any of this evolution stuff!"

First of all, they will get the question marked wrong. Secondly, they will annoy the teacher/professor. Thirdly, they may not even have time to finish the test if they feel the need to express their personal opinion all along the way.

What I do recommend is writing something like, "According to the textbook, it was 3.8 billion years ago." This will be marked as being the "correct" answer, but the student is not in any way stating they believe it to be true. They will, however, show respect for the teacher/professor and will demonstrate they are paying attention and grasping the core concepts. One additional recommendation is to approach the teacher/professor at the beginning of the semester and let them know they are fully aware they will be teaching evolution (or whatever the controversial topic may be) and that they intend to respectfully learn as much as they can about this particular viewpoint. The student can also let them know they do not necessarily agree with many of the tenets associated with that belief. By using this approach, the student will not feel it necessary to add commentary on each answer they give on a test. All they need to do is demonstrate they grasped the concepts being taught and are able to convey this during an exam.

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If the student wishes to do more than just survive the class and actually challenge the teacher/professor, I would recommend the following:

Make an appointment with the teacher/professor for a brief meeting in their office outside of class hours to discuss the topic in question. Let's use the creation vs. evolution controversy as an example. The student could ask the teacher/professor, "What are the best evidences for molecules-to-man evolution?" (We've discussed the importance of using this phraseology in previous articles. We don't want to discuss "evolution" as is often associated with simple variation within major kinds of animals or life forms, but rather the idea that life arose from non-living chemicals and the first single-celled forms of life transformed into every other form of life on the planet.)

If they are able to supply you with a list (e.g., 3-5 lines of evidence), make sure they are specific enough and confirm that these are truly some of the best evidences available. For example, if one of the evidences is listed as being, "the fossil record," ask what specifically about the fossil record provides evidence. Once you have a list, do not begin to debate any individual evidence, but simply thank them for their time and say you will look into these further.

The next step is to research the content of their list. There are many ways of doing this, one of which is to contact our ministry, and we can help supply information regarding whatever might appear on their list. The student can then make an additional appointment with their teacher/professor as a follow-up. The student might state something like, "I really appreciated the time you took to help me understand what some of the best evidences are for molecules-to-man evolution. I found what you shared to be fascinating, so I did some additional research. I would like to briefly summarize what I discovered and leave a few articles with you in case you are interested in reading them for yourself."

Do not expect the teacher/professor to respond in a calm manner indicating they feel they are wrong about their beliefs and they are eager to learn more about what you have researched. I suppose that could happen, but that's more of a fantasy outcome and not very realistic. There are all sorts of ways they might respond, including becoming very angry and defensive. They may change the subject. They may resort to attacking you and your character (verbal assault). They may resort to what is known as "elephant hurling," in which case they make large, vague, dogmatic statements such as, "Evolution is a fact, like apples falling off of trees. It's been observed over and over. All scientists believe it and you'd have to be crazy to doubt it!"

At this point, you've done your part in respectfully challenging what is being taught. It's not up to you to force the outcome of your efforts. That's out of your control, anyway. You'll have to pray about how God leads you to proceed at that point. You may have to drop it altogether, or you may have an opportunity to discuss things further. Either way, you must maintain a good Christian testimony throughout the entire interaction, which isn't always easy. Ultimately, it isn't about you or winning an argument. It's about being a light in a dark world and doing your part, independent of how others might respond. If we were strictly dealing with an academic argument, this would be a lot easier. However, we are really dealing with a spiritual issue, and we always need to prayerfully keep this in mind.

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I still feel there's a lot more to share, but we've run out of space once again. Maybe I should write an entire book on the subject!

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