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**Before You Ask - Chapter 7
Ad Hominem...Verbally Abusive Personal Attacks**

**Chapter 7
Ad Hominem...Verbally Abusive Personal Attacks
General Verbally Abusive & Personal Attacks**

Techniques & Suggested Replies for Dealing With Ad Hominem Attacks

- Technique No. 1: Ignore the bait**
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Ad Hominem - General Information

"When sound proof is lacking, mud is a good substitute."
"No case--abuse the other attorney!"

It is easy for some to confuse the merits of a claim with those of its source. For example, some are inclined to reject a Question, when it comes from someone they disapprove of or don't like. In effect, they are saying:

I reject your claim because you are [blank].

Replace [blank] with any term or phrase that might have a negative impact: "an anti-truth activist", "a liar", "ignorant," "just saying that to get even," and so on. A fact about the person making a claim or asking a Question is rarely grounds for rejecting the claim. Even so, workers often counter tough questions by heaping verbal abuse or accusations on a Questioner. Suppose the question is: "What is the underlying Scriptural basis for a particular religious belief or practice?" And evidence is flimsy at best or nonexistent. Some replies "get personal" and use verbal attacks abusing the Questioner's personal character, origins, circumstances, opinions,

affiliations or behavior.

Truth is the answer every Questioner is seeking to his question. Truth is truth--period. Regardless of when or where; regardless of whether it is expressed, exposed or questioned by friend or foe; regardless of whether the one speaking the truth is a king, a slave, a prisoner, the Bible, the devil or a talking donkey. Anyone can speak the truth--even a notorious liar, or a person strongly motivated by self-interest, jealousy or vengeance. Hostile witnesses may speak the truth. Even the demons spoke the truth that Jesus was: "the Christ, the Son of God, The Holy One of God," in Luke 4. The lifestyle, desires, hopes, disappointments and circumstances of the speaker have absolutely no relevance to the accuracy of the words he speaks.

If Ms. Questioner has doubtful credibility in some area, the proper response is to suspend judgment about it, or to ignore it. No matter what claim or question Ms. Q might make, we are rarely justified in rejecting it as false because of our knowledge or suspicions about Ms. Q. If Ms. Q supplies REASONS for believing something, the question of whether those reasons establish the truth of her claim is totally unaffected by her alleged lack of credibility. No fact whatsoever about Ms. B would constitute a reason for rejecting, discounting, objecting to, or even suspending judgment about the worth of her beliefs or inferences. Considerations as to a person's credibility are irrelevant to the question of whether her premises establish her conclusions.

Replies using verbally abusive attacks and accusations in lieu of good, sound reasoning and evidence are called "Fallacies of Ad Hominem" (Latin for "to the person") in textbooks on Logic and Debate. This tactic has long been recognized, even back to the time Latin was in use. Ad Hominem Fallacies are character assassination, but in reality, your character, whether good or bad, has absolutely no bearing on your question or viewpoint. The character and actions of the Questioner are irrelevant, and especially so when the practice or belief you are questioning was in place long before you were ever born.

Attempts to insult, ridicule, belittle, mock, taunt, shame, scorn or batter you are all personal attacks. They are directed "to the man" (hence the Latin name "to the person") rather than "to the man's point, argument or question." Some Ad Hominem attacks are made by using the Insult-Weapon; others use the Shame-Weapon, which will be discussed in greater detail later. Ad Hominem Fallacies can be divided into three types: (1) Abusive, (2) Circumstantial and (3) Tu Quoque. Each type will be discussed in more detail.

An Abusive Ad Hominem attacks your character or ability, using that as reason to disregard your input. It insinuates that you are defective in some area; therefore whatever you say on this issue is also defective.

The Circumstantial Ad Hominem attack cites your personal situation or circumstance as the reason you accept or advise an action. The implication is that you are self-serving. "Of course you would advise that--it's in your best interest do to so!"

In Ad Hominem Tu Quoque, your point is not addressed, but rather attention is called to a similar alleged weakness or wrongdoing of yours. Tu Quoque is Latin for "You, too!"

However real or imagined, your deficiencies and circumstances are not relevant to the issue being discussed. Whether or not a practice is justified by the Bible has absolutely no connection or relevance whatsoever with the Questioner's background, lifestyle, desires, motives, deficiencies or circumstances. Pointing out supposed faults in the Questioner DOES NOT address the truth or falsity of the question itself. It is a diversion. An assault on the Questioner is merely a low down attempt at diversion...at any cost.

NOTICE HOW JESUS ANSWERED QUESTIONS: Jesus was asked by John the Baptist' disciples in Matt. 11: "...Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Did Jesus say, "John, if you were 'what you ought to be' you wouldn't have asked that question?" Or, "John, you should KNOW the answer to that!" No, He didn't reproach them or give them/him the run-around. Instead, Jesus quoted Old Testament Scripture (Is. 35:5-6) which foretold that the promised Messiah (Christ) would perform miracles when He came to earth. And Jesus was famous for performing these same miracles: healing the sick, opening the eyes of blind, healing the lame so they walked, etc. He answered their question by showing them the answer in the Scriptures, which confirmed to them Who He Was.

This fellowship claims it is the closest way to the New Testament ministry and church, and that the workers follow Jesus' example more closely than any other ministers. If the workers closely followed Jesus' example in answering questions of the friends, would they not willingly show them the Scripture confirming that the beliefs and practices of the 2x2 fellowship are God's will?

Ad Hominem Verbally Abusive & Personal Attacks "Getting a bit personal, aren't we??"

An attack may be carried out with name-calling, stereotyping or pigeonholing. Value-laden, discrediting or shameful labels may be freely applied, such as "the devil's agent," "a worker of Satan," "a trouble-maker," "a sower of doubt," "poison," "hate mail," etc An attack may cast doubt on your intelligence, integrity, sanity, judgment, morality, spirituality, etc. Some attackers point out how you or your action have adversely affected them: i.e. caused them to be disappointed, embarrassed, angry, ashamed, pained or put them to some trouble. ALL OF WHICH ARE IRRELEVANT to the issue in question. They claim to follow the standard of the New Testament; therefore, their practices are either the commandments of God or "commandments of men" (Mark 7:7-13).

Attacks dealing with what you ARE usually point out some alleged, undesirable character flaw, such as being unwilling, rebellious, difficult, doubtful, vain, deceived, bitter, unhappy, troubled, miserable; OR because you ARE NOT properly submissive, humble, etc.

An attack with the intent to shame may be directed towards something you HAVE, such as the wrong reasons, wrong motive, wrong spirit, bad attitude, doubt, unbelief OR because you

DON'T HAVE enough faith, willingness, submission, etc.

Attacks are sometimes accusations of some selfish things you allegedly WANT, such as to be noticed; to take control, to get attention; to take your own way; to follow the world OR DON'T WANT to understand or see, do or believe.

Some attacks are engineered so you will feel ashamed about some things you DO or DID, such as cause trouble or strife, mistakes or failures you made, doing as the world does, OR because you DON'T believe the workers' words are equal in authority to God's Word; don't accept that the workers are given special revelation; don't believe the fellowship is God's ONLY right way.

As in real war, there are numerous ways and means to attack and abuse. At times, several are used in one whack, or in conjunction. Then, you may get a double or triple whammy! An attacker may sweet-talk and smile at you, and at the same time put a knife in your heart and cruelly turn it. Learning certain phrases and various forms of Ad Hominem verbige often used in verbally abusive attacks will tip you off that an attack is about to be delivered.

A very common response to an unwanted question is to infer that your question is caused by another DEEPER, serious problem. Other attacks are structured to make you feel ashamed, guilty or embarrassed. Of course, the ultimate goal is always the same: to cause you to drop your question. Some have a further agenda; that of utterly crushing your ego for daring to question them. Don't be alarmed. Their efforts don't have to succeed and will only be as successful as you allow them to be. By refusing to accept or believe their accusations or assertions, you can foil their attempt to divert your attention to yourself and your deficiencies.

REMEMBER: Their goal is for you to drop your question. If they can sidetrack you into defending yourself against their insult, or cause you to feel ashamed, they will succeed in evading your question.

In Ad Hominem attacks, verbal abuse is used to influence and gain your acceptance or compliance--without giving good reason. Don't accept their assessment of your faults! ONLY God can read your heart--who are they to slander your inner man? Have these particular faults ever been brought up to you before? Don't you find it strange that they weren't brought up UNTIL someone couldn't or didn't want to answer your question(s)? Your flaws and deficiencies are absolutely irrelevant to whether or not there is good Biblical reason to support the belief or practice you questioned.

When you are criticized or attacked, it is normal to want to defend yourself, and also to counter attack or "hit back." In other words, when you are pushed hard, you will tend to push back. However, if you do, you will end up playing the game their way, and they will be the winner. Although it may prove difficult, resisting the temptation to defend yourself is the best route to take. DEFENDING YOURSELF SIDETRACKS THE DISCUSSION. It is highly likely that you will not obtain the information you seek, and instead will be caught up in a series of attacks and defenses, which are a complete waste of time. To avoid this, don't defend yourself, don't counterattack, and don't reject their claims outright. Just don't react to their attacks--instead, sidestep them and call the discussion back to the main topic.

If they know the answer, why don't they just tell you? Why do they resort to pointing out faults, name-calling and verbal abuse? I suggest it is either because they:

- (1) don't know the answer, or
- (2) don't want to tell you the answer.

REMEMBER THIS! An insult, accusation or attack proves nothing about you, nor does it answer your question. It does prove, however, that they don't want to answer your question. Might be interesting to learn why...! DON'T TAKE THE INSULT OR ASSAULT PERSONALLY! This cannot be stressed enough. Just IGNORE it!! Mentally redefine the deficiency message you received from them so that you don't perceive it as an insult to you. It's a gimmick! It's like flattery; it's given in an attempt to gain something. So detach yourself from your feelings, and let the insulting put-down be like water running off your back. Don't let it sink in. DON'T let it hurt you (or don't let it show if it does!), and don't allow it to sidetrack the conversation.

They would give the same response to ANYONE who asked a question about a practice or belief they don't have scripture to support. It is highly unlikely you were the first person they have clobbered with this maneuver. They may have gotten off the hook the last time they used it, but it doesn't have to be successful this time--not at YOUR expense anyway! ! You CAN foil their attempt! Don't let them weasel out of giving you a straight answer--especially not after they have heaped insults on you! Keep them on track, and remain intent on getting an answer out of them, even if it is simply an, "I don't know."

Ignoring their insult doesn't mean that you won't have the pleasure of calling a spade a spade. But giving insult for insult lowers you to the level of the insulter (remember your mother telling you this?). You don't have to attack the person. You can show him that you see quite clearly what he is attempting to do by insulting you, and point out the irrelevance between your character and your question and his reply.

It is important to maintain good eye contact when doing this. Muster up a completely unashamed, guilt-free, all-knowing, bemused, "I'm no dummy" expression. Don't ruin the effect by sounding ugly or nasty; or by having a sneer or smug tone, or by raising your voice. Retain a respectful, confident attitude and good eye contact. Keep your goal uppermost in your mind, and steer them back to your question.

Do not even for a minute consider that the attack on you might be warranted. Attacks are irrelevant to the issue at hand. Even if the accusation is true, an attack on YOU does NOT answer your question, and is not warranted. What happened is that your question put them on the defensive, so they used a defense mechanism: Attack Be the Exception! Allow this low-down tactic to fail this time!! Whatever fault of yours they indicate your questioning "shows or proves" to them is just specu-la-tion to get them off the "hot seat." Don't let their strategy work. Don't accept their criticism or take their remarks personally and feel guilty or ashamed. Look them in the eye with all the dignity you can assume. Recognize that their remark is designed to manipulate you into dropping your question(s), and resolve not to let it happen. Duck the attack. Totally reject it and zero back to the subject they were hoping you would leave alone. They may have successfully used this tactic before to evade a particular question and to

ward off further questions, but this time it's not going to work

Techniques & Suggested Replies To Abusive Personal Attacks

Technique No. 1: Ignore the bait. In doing this, you are claiming you are not in the position of X. It has been said that a person is treated with as much respect as he shows himself. I believe there is a lot of truth in that, and have proved it many times over. You didn't deserve the insult; they don't have the authority to dish out insults; and you don't respect their opinion:

"Please, could we just stick to the question I asked, why X?"

"I have no intention of being sidetracked from my question into discussing my imperfections. I am still waiting to learn your answer to my question, why X?"

"I get the idea that you aren't interested in explaining these things to me. Could it be that YOU yourself don't know the Scriptural reason that this fellowship follows this practice?"

"Please, I have a simple one-track mind and have to stick to one subject at a time. Now, what is your answer to my question, why X?"

"Hey! It almost sounds as if you are trying to lay a guilt trip on me! Well, I don't happen to be in the mood to defend myself today (said with a smile). Now, what do you say to my question, why X?"

"We don't have a lot of time, so it would help if we suspend judgment and stick to my question, why X?"

"There is a rumor that the workers are not interested in answering questions of the friends. Is that true? If it's not true, then what is the answer to my question, why X?"

"Why don't you just answer my question? Resorting to insults or to pointing out my faults in reply to a question is a pretty good indication that the question disturbs you, and for some reason you don't want to answer it. I admit I am curious as to why that might be the case, but our time is limited, and I really want to know the answer to my question, why X?"

"Let's stick to the question at hand, instead of discussing the status of my spirit.
What would your answer be to this question if I were not X?
OR How do you answer this question when a not-X person asks it?"

Technique No. 2: Point out their tactic in a general way; then restate your question. Don't respond to their insulting bait X. Zip back to your question and hang on tenaciously until you get an answer--of some sort. "It's obvious to me that you're attacking my character in order to avoid answering my question. Now days, the schools are training children to recognize these tactics. Are you aware that your reply/line of reasoning commits the Fallacy of Ad Hominem? This Fallacy is committed when the person is attacked, instead of the person's position. You attacked (me personally/my character), instead of answering my question. Attacking (me/the Questioner) proves nothing about the subject I brought up. When someone is on the hot seat, or is between a rock and a hard place and feeling pressured or threatened, they often resort to using this fallacy. Are my questions and persistence making you feel (pressured/stressed)? I am really sincere in wanting to know, why X?"

"It's interesting to me that my shortcomings weren't mentioned until after I brought up the subject of Z. Does my question make you uncomfortable? Do you not want to answer it? Why do you resort to (insulting me; judging me; attacking my character), when a straight answer from the Bible would satisfy? Or perhaps you don't know the answer? I want to know, why X, and I'm not going to stop until I get the answer."

"Wait a minute! It looks as though this visit might be getting off on the wrong foot. I AM YOUR FRIEND, and I feel like I am being treated as an enemy! (Those words/that statement) were/was (irrelevant, unnecessary, unkind, unbecoming and uncalled for.) What's more--you haven't answered my question. I didn't request an assessment of my faults. I know I'm not perfect. I asked you over because I need to know the answers to some questions, and you are supposed to be the expert in these spiritual matters. Now let's wipe the slate clean and start all over. I asked you why X, and I want to know?!"

"So far, my (X character/integrity) has been (maligned/attacked,) and my question has been ignored. However, I STILL intend to find out why...X? Are you going to give me a straight answer? If you can't answer my question why X, then who knows the answer? Does your overseer know?"

"It doesn't surprise me that the workers hold the opinion that those who question have a 'wrong spirit.' What does surprise me is that my question threatens you so you feel it necessary to resort to using such an obvious distraction gimmick. I am really puzzled as to why you don't just answer my question, instead of judging my character. You give your LIFE for this system--SURELY you know a good Biblical reason for why X?"

"Where did you learn that X-unwillingness reveals itself in questioning?" If I were you, I wouldn't go around using that line of reasoning. No student gets out of a logic or debate class without being able to recognize that VERY common fallacious reasoning tactic. The name of it is the Ad Hominem Fallacy. It is basically attacking the person who asks the question rather than answering his question and giving proof of your position. Now what is the answer to my question, why X???"

"Let's leave my spirit out of this. You've attacked my character and integrity; and done everything but answer my question. I'm going to ask you one more time: Why X?"

Technique No. 3: Point out irrelevance between X and/or Y and your question. Be prepared to explain WHY the points under consideration are irrelevant. "Pronouncing judgment on my character is completely irrelevant to my question. The things I am concerned about (took place/were written) long before I was ever born. Do you or do you not know the answer to why X?"

"We are all aware that people believe what they want to. They see things through rose-colored, (brain-washed) glasses which are colored by their environment and experiences. I'm not going to try to convince you to believe anything different about me because it's irrelevant to my question. But, be careful you don't deceive yourself! Now, what is your answer to my question, why X?"

"The answer to my question should be the same, regardless of the state of my spirit (X): good, bad or wrong; willing or unwilling; because my spirit (X) is not relevant to this question. Now, what I really need to know is why X?"

"Surely the answer to my question would be the same, regardless of whether or not (it was asked in faith or unbelief/a woman or man asked)? After all (faith/one's sex) has no affect on/is irrelevant to truth. So why X?"

"The truth stands unchanged, regardless of whether or not it is true that I am (X doubting/unwilling/need to submit). The Bible says that Jesus was born of a virgin, regardless of whether or not I believe that--it is still the truth. Regardless of my shortcomings, the truthful answer to my question will be the same. Now, why X?"

"I simply asked a simple question. The condition of my spirit is irrelevant to this conversation. What I want to know is what good reason do the workers have for believing X?"

Technique No. 4: "Agree with thine adversary quickly." You may agree with something the other party said, but what they said did NOT answer your question. Attack the significance of their point. "That is true, but so what?" Go right back to your question, like a boomerang. Don't be surprised, however, if you are given ANOTHER fallacious reasoning technique on the heels of the one you just countered. "If we start discussing all our shortcomings, we could be here until the Lord comes back! So let's not get sidetracked. I would like to stick to my question, why X?"

"I couldn't agree with you more! And the more aware I become of my shortcomings, the more grateful I am that Jesus paid for my sins. My heartfelt desire is to bring others to know Him also. My problem is: How do I answer them when they ask me, why we X?"

"Oh, I understand perfectly! The problem is that I disagree completely at the same time! Now, why X?"

"What you said is certainly very true, but it's not significant in the least to my question, why X?"

"What you have said is true, but it is not relevant to the point we are discussing, why X?"

"I will be the first to admit I have many, many faults. However, I don't see how the answer to my question can be found in a discussion of them! So if you don't mind, let's stick to the subject. I am still waiting to know your answer to my question, why X?"

"You're absolutely right. I don't Y (have faith in; am unwilling). I am quite willing to follow God's commands that I can read in the Bible, but I don't (have faith in; am unwilling) to follow men's words, instructions and traditions as though THEY were God's Word, when I can't find a basis for them in the Bible. (Mark 7:7-13). The Bible advises us against putting absolute faith in men's word. So if you would just help me by giving me the Scripture text supporting the practice of X, I will be content."

Technique No. 5: Turning the Tables. Make their argument or explanation work for you, and against them. This is very effective. Hung by the tongue! Replying to: "If you were not UNWILLING, you wouldn't ask questions":

"And then again, maybe it is because YOU are UNWILLING to answer my question--or unable to--that you are trying to distract me from my question, why X?"

"The answer is the very thing that would eliminate the UNWILLINGNESS I stand accused of. Why are you unwilling to answer my question, why X?"

"On the other hand, it could also be that YOU are UNWILLING to answer my question or unable to do so; so you condemn me for questioning, why X?"

"We all have challenges with being X/UNWILLING. Are you possibly X/UNWILLING to answer my question, why X?"

Replying to: insinuations that you have a problem or are trying to be DIFFICULT, UNREASONABLE, etc.

"Why is it so DIFFICULT for you to tell me the real story/the truth about X?"

"I asked a very REASONABLE question. In return, I received judgment. I am still waiting for a REASONABLE answer. I choose to ignore your unkind/uncalled for remark. There have been many times in my life that I have wished I could take back some of some of MY words. Now, let's get back to my REASONABLE question. What is your answer to: Why X?"

"I think I see what you mean: Are you saying I AM the PROBLEM because I asked you a PROBLEM question? Do you have a PROBLEM with my question, why X?"

Following are a couple examples from the Bible where men used the technique of "turning the tables."

In Numbers 16:3, Korah, a Levite, took several choice men: "And they gathered them-selves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, YE TAKE TOO MUCH UPON YOU, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?"

***Then in Num 16:7, Moses turned the tables, using Korah's own words: "And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy: YE TAKE TOO MUCH UPON YOU, YE SONS OF LEVI."

In Num 16:9, Moses speaking: "SEEMETH IT BUT A SMALL THING UNTO YOU, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?"

***Then Moses sent for Eliab and Abiram, who replied by turning the tables and using Moses own words in Num 16:13: "IS IT A SMALL THING that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?"

Technique No. 6: Reply using Scripture: Replying with a quote from Scripture or a phrase from a hymn makes it hard for them to "kick against the pricks." Defend your right to question; to be imperfect; make it understood they are not your authority--and have no right to condemn, judge you. What they think doesn't count. "He that is without sin...let him cast the first stone..." John 8:7. Are you sinless? Neither am I. I'm so very glad Jesus paid the price for our sins on Calvary. Now, what' your answer to my question, why X?"

"Ask and ye shall receive." (Matt 7:8) 'Asking' is simple, but I never thought 'receiving' would be so difficult. Why is it so difficult for you to give me a simple straightforward answer to this question, why X?"

"Condemning the source/or the messenger has no affect on the accuracy of information, evidence and truth. "Am I your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Now, are you going to answer my question, why X, or do I need to ask someone else?"

"I am well aware that I have many shortcomings (looking grieved and humble). Putting all that aside, however, I was convicted recently when I read 1 Peter 3:15: "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you...". So I sat down and

made a list of all the things to which I give lip service, but for which I didn't know the underlying Scriptural reasons. So will you please help me by explaining why X and Y and Z?"

If good solid reasons are not forthcoming, try countering with:

"Well, since you don't know the answer to my question, why do we do X, then it seems reasonable not to expect me to continue the practice of X. Is this what you mean?"

"I don't see any point in discussing 'motes and beams' (Matt 7:3). It's neither of our places to be Speck Inspectors. God is the only truly qualified judge. Now, what is your answer to my question, why X?"

"I would caution you to be VERY careful in making remarks like that. You're sealing your own fate: `For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' (Matt 7:2). Now, back to my question, why X?"

"There's is really no point in your voicing your judgment of me. 'To my MASTER, I stand or fall' (Romans 14:4.) Perhaps you were trying to evade my question? I am not going to give up until I know the answer to why X? If you won't tell me, who do you recommend I ask who will know the answer?"

"Jesus said for everyone that asketh, receiveth;" That means me, since God is no "respector of persons." And that means it's OK to ask questions, and that there is an answer to my question. "And he that seeketh, findeth." That means that He has promised I will get my question answered. "And to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." So I'll be able to understand the answer. Now, again, what is the answer to my question, why X?" (quote from Luke 11:10)

Jesus said: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" If you truly are a servant of God, then I won't receive a stone, a serpent or a scorpion for an answer to my question, why X?" (quote from Luke 11:11-12)

More Chapters will be added in the future.