

# Responding to the Opposition

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I am a debater, and I learned good and bad ways to respond to an opponent. It is extremely important we respond to people in social media in some very strict ways. Paul gives us four. First, we need to learn the art of gentle instruction. The opposite would be harshness. Our goal is to bring people to a different position. Do I beat them with a stick? Or do I patiently and gently teach? This doesn't mean I can't be firm and resolute with the truth. But, the tone of voice, the words we select, the images we use, and the fervor employed all affect whether we will be heard. If another cannot hear you, they cannot understand you, and if they do not understand you, they cannot consider your position and change theirs. Second, we must keep our aim, in matters requiring repentance, that God will lead the person to a new position. We are not alone in the argument. If we teach gently, then God is at work in bringing our opponent to a place of change. It is not your job to get someone to repent. It is God's job. Stay in your lane. Thirdly, our desire in any conflict is for people to come to their senses (also realizing that we may need a little more sense in the conflict too). I know we would like to shake people back into their senses, but that is not how it usually works. The prodigal son (Luke 15) came to his senses in the pigpen, as the Father patiently waited on the front porch. Some people will have to learn from experience. Fourthly, remember that the other person may be taken captive by the evil one. What do we do when someone is held in captivity to a tyrant? Who is the real enemy here? Paul said in Ephesians 6 that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and authorities of this dark world. The real enemy is the devil. Let's make sure we are all fighting the instigator of quarreling and not one another. Perhaps if we can convince our opponent that we have a common enemy who is trying to divide us and destroy what we both love, and keep us from having what is truly good, then we will stop quarreling with one another and turn our combined attention to the real enemy. Surely Satan has invaded social media and is using it as another tool for division. We must see through his evil scheme. Now go out there and change your game plan and make Jesus proud.