

Persuasiveness

vs. Contentiousness

Persuasiveness is convincing others to follow God's ways because of how His ways are working in our lives.

Definition

Several Greek words reveal the fuller meaning of persuasiveness. *Peitho* (*persuade*) means “to induce one by words to believe; to convince by argument, true or false; to assent to evidence or authority.” It carries with it the concept of guiding a person's thoughts by a sequence of convincing statements. *Elegcho* (*convince*) means “to confute; to convict; to find fault with; to correct, admonish, reprove.” *Dialogizomai* (*reason*) means “to bring together different reasons, to reckon thoroughly, to deliberate.”

Why Persuasiveness Is Important

God's primary calling for every believer is to be a witness of His truth. Persuasiveness is communicating truth to a person's spirit through sound reasoning and convincing him to follow the ways of God. Persuasiveness will increase our effectiveness in helping people turn from the way of death to the path of life.

The eternal torments of hell should be a powerful motivation for us to develop the skills of persuasiveness so that we can turn unbelievers from such a place. This was the motivation of Paul:

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (II Corinthians 5:11).

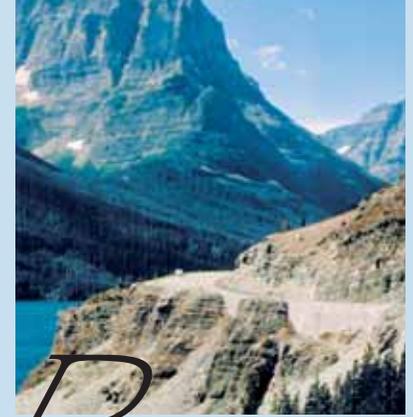
When we talk to people, they tend to have two questions in their minds: (1) Why is this important for me to hear? (2) How can I apply it to my life? Our first words should answer these two questions.

How Paul Used Persuasiveness

Paul was a master of persuasion, leading many to Christ.

- He “**persuaded** them [hearers] to continue in the grace of God” (Acts 13:43).
- He “reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and **persuaded** the Jews and the Greeks” (Acts 18:4).
- He “went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and **persuading** the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8).
- He “expounded and testified the kingdom of God, **persuading** them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23).

The most significant testimony of Paul's effectiveness in persuasion came from his opponents. A silversmith of Ephesus



Persuasion is helping people find out what they need and then showing them the best way to get it.

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—II Corinthians 5:11

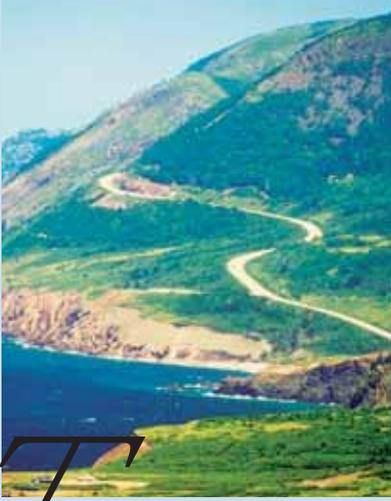
“We are all missionaries . . . Wherever we go, we either bring people nearer to Christ, or we repel them from Christ.”

—Eric Liddell



Convincing people requires a confidence in our voices that matches the truth and love in our hearts.

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . . But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him.” —Ephesians 4:14-15



The most effective persuasion is convincing a person that an idea originated with him.

Two Basic Motivations for Persuasiveness

1. What will I gain if I do it?
2. What will I lose if I don't?

God has placed these two motivations in the heart of man. Therefore, we must answer them when motivating others to do what is right. The ultimate gain is Heaven; the ultimate loss is hell.

The impending judgment of the wicked is the urgency of persuasion.

“When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning . . . the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”

—Ezekiel 3:18

exclaimed, “Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath **persuaded** and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands” (Acts 19:26).

The Secrets of Persuasiveness

1. The authority of a clear conscience

Paul continually exercised himself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men. In II Corinthians 5:11, he associated a clear conscience with persuasiveness. He also identified a good conscience as an essential element in the battle for truth: “. . . Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck” (I Timothy 1:18–19). If we do not have a clear conscience, we will not be able to speak convincingly about the work and ways of a holy God.

2. The authority of Scripture

Persuasiveness is based on the authority behind it, and there can be no greater authority than “thus saith the Lord.” Using Scripture was the key to the persuasiveness of Paul, Apollos, and others. Apollos “mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:28). In order to have this authority, we must learn how to skillfully use the Word of God, “rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

3. The authority of personal testimony

Paul often used his own testimony to convince his hearers

of the power and truth of God. He even used his testimony in talking to King Agrippa and almost persuaded him to become a believer. (See Acts 26:13–28.) The saints spoken of in Revelation 12:11 overcame Satan by the word of their testimony. The power of testimonies to persuade unbelievers or those unlearned in the things of God is described in I Corinthians 14:25: “And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.”

4. The authority of appealing to the conscience

Paul learned on Mars' hill the limitations of trying to persuade hearers by appealing to their minds. (See Acts 17:18–34.) They listened until he spoke of the resurrection, which was beyond their capacity to understand. A more effective method of persuasion was explained by Paul in II Corinthians 4:2: We “have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.” In order to appeal to the conscience of a person, it is important to get his permission to ask personal questions about past failures.

5. The effectiveness of using gracious words

God gives us grace, which is the desire and power to do His will. In the same way, we must use gracious words to persuade others to do what is right. “Let your speech be always with grace,

seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6).

Even when others argue with us, we are not to be contentious. “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (II Timothy 2:24–26).

Biblical Examples of Persuasiveness

1. Ahithophel was such a wise counselor that he spoke “as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God.” Yet, Hushai saved David’s life by persuading Absalom to disregard Ahithophel’s wise counsel. (See II Samuel 16:23, 17:1–23.)
2. Haman was a skilled and clever diplomat, yet Esther persuaded King Ahasuerus to listen to her appeal, which exposed Haman’s plot against her people. (See Esther 7.)
3. Jesus was sent to the Jewish nation; however, a Syrophenician woman persuaded Him to include her daughter’s healing in His agenda. (See Mark 7:24–30.)
4. Israel was commanded not to make a league with any other nation, but the Gibeonites persuaded them to violate this instruction. (See Joshua 9.)

Personal Evaluation

How persuasive are you?

- Do you persuade Christian friends to join you in doing good works for others who are in need?
- Do you have a written testimony concerning various areas of the Christian life so that others would be persuaded to follow your example?
- Do you persuade others to believe on Jesus Christ?
- Do you persuade rebellious sons or daughters to clear their consciences and get back under the authority of God and their parents?
- Do you convince friends who are considering a divorce not to go through with it?
- Do you persuade brothers or sisters to reject wrong decisions?
- Do you persuade others to dedicate their lives to God?
- Do you persuade those who use Scripture to justify wrong activities that they are misusing God’s Word?

The **peacock** uses the fullest measure of his iridescent fan of feathers and enthusiastic display to attract the attention of a prospective mate.



When it comes to convincing others, our lives are more persuasive than our words.

“Whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

—I Peter 2:12

Reduce contention by finding common ground with someone who disagrees with you.

“What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.”—Psalm 34:12–14

