

Notes from 'Secrets of Libertarian Persuasion' for Sept. 4's Meetup Discussion

Chinese Bamboo – Inspiration for planting the seeds of liberty (pg. 21-22)

Prospecting for Gold - Effective libertarian persuasion is like prospecting for gold. A good prospect needs to know where gold is most likely to be found. Then a good prospector needs to know the difference between high-grade and low-grade ore. A stubborn prospector impoverishes himself and soon quits prospecting for gold for good. How do we tell them apart? Ask qualifying questions.

"If it were possible to make government so small that it need an income tax, would you want it."

"If you discovered the government programs made people its designed to help worse off, would you be willing to replace it with a private programs that?"

If they answer maybe, ask "If I gave you a short book that discussed this idea, would you read it?"

However you ask it, each question asks, "If freedom produced dramatically better results, would you want it?"

How to sell liberty - Before we came to the idea of liberty, we needed to have our own objections and concerns addressed. We've bought the ideas, but we may find it difficult to "sell" the ideas to others because they have different objections and different concerns.

Books like "Why Government Doesn't Work" and "Liberty A-Z" by Harry Browne and Bastiat's "The Law" and "Healing Our World" by Dr. Mary Ruwart. Bastiat said, "The worst thing that can happen to a good cause is not to be skillfully attacked, but to be ineptly defended."

Ben Franklin's Road to Excellence- So we've found the high-grade ore, and we know the answers to satisfy people's objections. But it is easy to get flustered when speaking with people, or you don't know which persuasion technique to use. Ben Franklin suffered from the same problem when trying to implement his 13 virtues that he wanted to turn into personal habits. Luckily, he found a simple and elegant technique. He would concentrate on one of his virtues for a full week and left his other 12 virtues to chance. The next week he would concentrate on his second virtues and left the other 12 virtues to chance. He did this for 13 weeks and then repeated four times.

Most of us are already doing one part of this; we're leaving these techniques to chance. The only thing we would need to modify is just concentrate one one technique each week. We'll find that after concentrating on one, our chances of improving confidence in using that technique improves. Below are the techniques that the author recommends.

Magic "If" - *Helps you discover the high-grade ore.* Imagine this. You're in discussion explaining how to solve this social problem with liberty solution. You've explained how and why your solution will work faster and more effectively. The other person says "Ya, but," "People won't accept," or "You can't do that because."

Respond, "You might be right. Most people may be against it, but if most people came to accept it, would you want it?" Or ask, "If it were up to you, would you want it?" We spend hours and hours explaining why our proposals would work. We spend our resources justifying the journey but not enough time asking if the person even desires the destination.

"Perhaps you think that the magic if won't work. Maybe it won't work, but if it did work more often with more people, would you be willing to try it with the next three people you speak with? If it made you more persuasive, would you want it?"

The Reverse - When you find yourself in an argument about the effectiveness of a government program, try The Reverse. Ask, what government program do they think the government as no business doing. "What government program is a total failure?" Ask the person to explain. Then play's Devil's Advocate and ask, "If someone said X, how would you respond?" The person will give the evidence and arguments that he or she find most persuasive. It respects their thoughts and concerns. Pascal wrote, "We are usually more convinced by reasons we have found ourselves than by those which have occurred to others." For them to learn, ask them to teach.

The Neglected Art of Listening - Most people want to communicate what they believe. If you can be one of those few who are actually listening, not just remaining silent, will desperately seek you out. High-impact listening has three phases: exploring emphasized words and phrases, noticing physical expressions, and listening with your eyes.

If someone repeats a word several times, ask what they mean by that. Ask them to explain further. When they make gestures when talking about a subject, ask them to tell you more. Making eye contact to let them know that you care. The person will most likely then reciprocate and listen and be more open to our ideas. We reap what we sow.

Are You Tied in Knots - "Mr. Jones is not an evil person. Mr. Jones did not lie, cheat and steal. Mr. Jones has never been accused of being a depraved and sick person. There is no evidence that Mr. Jones underhandedly swindled his grandmother of her life savings.

What people hear is "Mr. Jones evil; Mr. Jones lie, cheat, steal; Mr. Jones sick person; and Mr. Jones swindled grandmother." We must advocate what we support rather than what we oppose. We support smaller government and personal responsibility" Instead of saying that we do not support the initiation of force, say we believe that human interaction should be voluntary.

The Wrong End of the Stick - When someone says they agree that 20,000 gun laws is too many and they ask which one would you keep, you are reaching for the wrong end of the stick. Instead, look for the areas of agreement. Ask which laws do they support repealing. Which laws do they think are most harmful? Reaching one end of the stick makes it a tug-of-war. Reaching for the other is a helping hand.

Carry an index card with a technique for one week. Mark each time the technique is used. "What gets measured frequently gets done frequently." You'll begin to build your confidence and use them with greater affect.

How to Make Your Ideas Unforgettable - So we've used our techniques and the person reacts positively to the liberty message. Unfortunately, that message gets diluted by the 100,000 words and images we see each day. The next step is to wrap your messages in clever quotes, witticisms, analogies and metaphors.

The quote should serve as a preservative of ideas. They should hitch a ride with your ideas, not be the main driver of the conversation.

The Impact of Asking Simple Questions - Most people have unexamined political assumptions. (See that's mine) We should try and make our message clear enough for a 12-year-old to understand. When someone says they believe in collective responsibility, ask what is collective responsibility, or ask for an example and how it works. Who decides what the responsibility is? Is it a voluntary responsibility, and what are the consequences for not complying?

As for myself, I've always had to accept them as my own beliefs before I fully accepted them. I accepted them on my own terms. It was almost never because someone was abrasive or rude. In fact, those instances tended to entrench my false beliefs. I think the goal is have people accept ideas on his or her own terms as if they are his or her own ideas.

"How can you tell you are making progress? Someone will say that you are over-simplifying an issue."

The Unsettling Question - "If every libertarian in America did exactly what you have done for the past 30 days, what would the measurable results be?"

"How many new libertarians would there be? How many new activists would we have? How many more supporters would we have? Actions have consequences. Liberty actions have liberty consequences. Inaction inspires no one. Action inspires many; progress inspires more; success inspires the most."

"Don't make a resolution. Just plan it and do it. Don't announce that you're going to do it. Just do it. Don't demand others do it. Just do it."

"If every libertarian in America did exactly what you *will* do for the *next* 30 days, what would the measurable results be?"