

Discussion Questions
Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions

FOREWORD:

According to Lee Strobel, why is Greg Koukl “consistently among the very best” defenders of the faith, a “prepared ambassador for Christ”? (foreword)

Strobel asks what you will do when someone “dismisses Christianity as a mythology-ridden anachronism”, when someone “paints you into a rhetorical corner and belittles your beliefs”. Has this happened to you? How well are you prepared? (foreword)

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CHAPTER 1: DIPLOMACY OR D-DAY?

“Never make a frontal assault on a superior force.” What does this mean for Christian apologetics? Is retreat (aka conflict avoidance) the only alternative?

Why do some people object to the use of the word, “tactics”, in the context of Christian apologetics?

What are the three basic “skills” that the Christian apologist needs to represent (to defend) Christ in today’s culture? Which of the three is the primary focus of this book? (Extra credit: Are they really skills?)

Koukl says, “I am not opposed to being assertive, direct or challenging. However, I never intend to be abrasive or abusive.” Is it possible to be direct & challenging without being abrasive?

What is the difference between strategy and tactics?

Koukl says, “Most people, even the smart ones, don’t give much thought to their opposition of Christianity.” What does he mean by that and what can we learn from that?

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CHAPTER 2: RESERVATIONS

What kind of arguments have to be avoided? How is this possible?

Did Jesus avoid arguing when confronted by an untruth?

Koukl says, "Therefore, the mind, not the Bible, is the very first line of defense God has given us against error." Does this mean your mind is more important than the Bible? Explain.

Koukl asks, "If the notion of truth is central to Christianity, and the ability to argue is central to the task of knowing the truth, why do some Christians get upset when you try to find the truth through argument and disagreement?"

What do you think of Koukl's statement, "When the church discourages principled debates and a free flow of ideas, the result is shallow Christianity and a false sense of unity."

Do you agree that you can't argue anyone into the Kingdom, that only the Spirit can change a sinner's heart? If so, then what is the role of reason and persuasion. Why isn't it enough to present the gospel and move on?

Do you agree that it isn't wise to "make a beeline for the cross in every conversation"?

What is the first thing you should do when God opens a door of opportunity to talk to someone?

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CHAPTER 3: GETTING IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT – THE COLUMBO TACTIC

Can you recall a time when someone ridiculed or questioned Christianity? Did your reaction fit either the “fight” or “flight” reflexive response? Did you wish, later, that you had known how to respond in a more constructive way?

Are “fight” and “flight” the only possible responses? What does Koukl recommend?

Why is it so effective to say, “You seem like a very intelligent person. Do you mind if I ask you a question?”

“The key to the Columbo tactic is to go on the _____ in an _____ way by using selected _____ to productively advance the conversation.”

How does “Columbo” allow you to defend by being inoffensively on offense?

There are three basic ways to use Columbo: (1) To _____ information; (2) to reverse the burden of _____; (3) to lead the conversation in a specific _____.

What are the keys to successful use of the Columbo tactic? (questions such as, “What do you mean by that? How does that work? I’m not sure I understand what you mean when you say _____.)

What mistakes could cause Columbo to fail?

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CHAPTER 4: COLUMBO STEP 2 – THE BURDEN OF PROOF

“Many challenges to Christianity thrive on vague _____ and forceful but vacuous _____.” Have you encountered such an objection to Christianity? Can you think of a specific example?

“Whoever makes the claim bears the _____.”

What are some other ways to ask, “How did you come to that conclusion?”

The first Columbo question helps you know _____ another person thinks. The second question helps you know _____ she thinks the way she does.

“You may be surprised to know that most critics are not _____ to defend *their faith*.”

Koukl tells us, “Reject the impulse to counter every assertion someone manufactures. Don’t try to refute every tale spun out of thin air. Instead, steer the _____ of proof back on the other person’s shoulders. Make them give you _____, not just a point of view. It’s not your job to defeat their claim. It’s their job to defend it.

What does Koukl mean when he says “... giving an explanation is not the same as giving an argument ...”

Why is Dawkin’s “story” of how wings might have developed so appealing? What is wrong with it?

What are the three questions you should always ask whenever someone offers an explanation/story instead of reasons? (1) Is it _____? (2) Is it _____? (3) Is it _____?

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Why is it almost always a mistake to challenge a professor or anyone who is in a position of superior power?

What is the “professor’s ploy”?

Why are the following words like magic? “Let me _____ about it.”

When you find yourself in the “hot seat”, facing an aggressive or knowledgeable person’s objections and criticisms, what is often the best way to respond?

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CHAPTER 5:

Discussion Questions
Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions

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Discussion Questions
Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions

CHAPTER 7:

Discussion Questions
Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions

CHAPTER 8: