

Tactics

by Greg Koukl (2009)

This is a textbook example of how to defend Christianity. Never make a frontal assault on a superior force. Try a relaxed diplomacy & stay in control. Drag them to the light & ask for clarification. Ask questions to expose weakness in their reasoning. Help them see the logical consequences of their beliefs. Pay attention & steer the conversation. Don't use these tactics merely to assault others (confront, but don't attack). We must have basic knowledge, wisdom to use it & character.

If anyone gets angry, I lose. Keep everyone calm. If we cannot disagree (with civility), then there is no checks & balance. Listening to only "yes men" can lead to trouble. Look for those who are hungry; don't waste time on the proud. Our job is to deliver the message; the results are up to God. Just get them to think about it.

Take a lesson from Colombo. **Ask questions to draw out how they think & why.** "Do you mind if I ask you a question?" "Maybe you can clear something up for me." **"What do you mean by that?"** "Let me see if I understand you on this." "Can you elaborate on that?" "What is your opinion on that?" **"Now how did you come to that conclusion?"** "Why did you say that?" "What are your reasons for holding that view?" "I'm curious. Why would that idea seem compelling to you?" "Just one more thing."

Whoever makes a claim bears the burden to prove it. Don't let them turn the tables on you. Ask him for reasons or facts to back up his claim. It's not my job to defeat the claim; it's their job to defend it. Ask is it possible, plausible & probable? Don't try to embarrass the speaker, just ask questions.

When someone is coming on strong, practice conversational aikido. You have some interesting ideas. Can you do me a favor & slow down? Take a moment to carefully explain your view & reasons for it to help me understand better. When you don't know a subject, take time to learn to be better prepared next time. Anticipate their objections. Write a possible dialog & roll play it.

Every time you get a favorable response to your question, the person is taking another step forward with you in the thinking process. If you word the question right, you can win any debate. Overcome fear with preparedness & action. Ask an animal rights advocate where they stand on abortion.

When listening to their questions, try to flush out strong opinions. Persuade, don't refute. Soften things up with phrases like these: "I'm just curious..." "something is bothering me..." "Maybe I'm missing something..."

Look for contradictory statements. "There are no absolutes." "It's wrong to say others are wrong." Francis Schaeffer suggests we adopt the other person's view long enough to follow its course carefully to see where you end up; then point out the flaws. People feel guilty because they are guilty. The answer is forgiveness, not denial, & that's where Jesus comes in. The opposite of faith is unbelief; the opposite of knowledge is ignorance. Sometimes the real audience is not the person we are talking with, but others listening in.

Precise numbers are more convincing than general estimates. Watch body language; let them leave before they ask to.

Ex 1: *We respect all life.* Then you're pro-life. *No, we are pro-choice, but I personally could never kill a baby.* Do you mean women should have the choice to kill their own babies? *That depends.* What kind of considerations would make it all right to kill a baby? *Incest.* So, if a 2-yr old child was conceived by incest, you would have the right to kill her?

Ex 2: *It's not rational to believe in God. There is no proof.* What kind of God do you reject? Specifically, what is irrational? What kind of evidence would be acceptable?

Ex 3: *Christianity is basically the same as all religion (love). We shouldn't tell others how to believe.* How much have you studied other religions? What was Jesus' own attitude on this? Isn't telling others to love one another just an example of telling them how they should live?

Ex 4: *I can't take the Bible too seriously since it was written by men who make mistakes.* Do you have any books that have any truth in them? Why is the Bible less truthful or reliable than other books? Do people always make mistakes in what they write?

Ex 5: *It's wrong to force you views on others. Christians involved in politics violate separation of church & state.* Do you vote? When you vote for someone, you are expecting them to pass laws reflecting your own point of view? Wouldn't that be forcing your views on others? So, are you saying only non-religious people should be allowed to vote?

Ex 6: I don't have any reasons, I just believe it. Why would you believe something when you have no reason to think it's true?

Ex 7: *The Bible isn't true.* Why do you say that? *Prove to the class why the Bible is true.* I haven't said anything about my view. You're just guessing right now. For all you know, I could be on your side. More to the point, my own view is irrelevant. It doesn't really matter what I believe. Your ideas are on the table, not mine. I'm asking for clarification. That's all.

Ex 8: *Are people who don't believe like you going to Hell?* --- [Avoid loaded questions.]

Ex 9: *Why do I need Jesus to get to heaven if I'm a good person?* Do you think people who commit a crime should be punished? Yes. So do I. Have you ever committed any moral crimes? Yes. So have I, but it puts us in a tight spot, doesn't it? This is where Jesus comes in. He personally paid the penalty. Either we accept His gift or reject it.

Ex 10: *When someone asks your personal view on a controversial issue.* This is actually a very personal question you're asking. Before I answer I want to know if it's safe to offer my views. Do you consider yourself a tolerant person? Do you respect diverse points of view, or do you condemn others for convictions that differ from your own?

Ex 11: *You're intolerant.* Why do you think that? *You think you're right & everyone who disagrees with you is wrong.* I do think my views are correct, but what about you? You seem to be disagreeing with me. Do you think your own views are right? Yes, *but I'm not intolerant, you are.* Why is it when I'm right, I'm intolerant, but when you're right, you're not? What am I missing?

Ex 12: *Science has proven that miracles don't happen.* Please explain to me exactly how the methods of science have disproved the possibility of supernatural events?

Ex 13: *When someone dodges questions.* I want you to notice what just happened. First you made a controversial statement, & when I asked questions, you changed the subject. Before we move on to new topic, would it be OK with you if we finished the old one? I am really interested in your response.

Ex 14: *Most people twist the Bible to say whatever they want.* Is there a specific verse that you have in mind? *No.* Have you ever studied the passages that concern you? *No.* Then how do you know they are twisting them?

Ex 15: *What gives you the right?* I get the impression you think I've made a mistake here. Where did I go wrong?

Ex 16: *All religions are basically the same.* In what way? *They all teach you shouldn't murder.* Consider this, either Jesus is the Messiah or He isn't, right? *OK.* If He isn't the Messiah, then the Christians are wrong & the Jews are right. If He is the Messiah, then the Jews are wrong & the Christians are right. One way or another, someone is right & someone is wrong. They cannot be the same, can they?

Ex 17: *The Bible has been translated & changed many times over the years.* Have you actually studied the transmission of ancient documents of the Bible? *No.* They have found them to be 99% accurate.

Ex 18: *I feel you are backing me into a corner.* I'm sorry, but you stated your opinions, but were unable to defend them.

Ex 98: *Debate in favor of "objective truth exists & can be known".* If my opponent was persuasive then his view was objectively true. Therefore, my point wins.

Ex 20: *Is Gandhi in Heaven?* Then you believe in Heaven. What kind of people go to Heaven? *Good People.* What is good? *Good & bad is relative.* If goodness cannot be defined, then how is it you assume Gandhi is in Heaven?

Ex 21: *Why does a loving God allow children in India to suffer?* God hadn't done this, Hinduism has. Ideas have consequences. Hinduism believes good & evil balance each other. So, some kids suffer so others may be happy.

Ex 22: *If homosexuality is morally neutral because it's natural,* then adoption by same-sex couples must be wrong because having babies is unnatural.

Ex 23: *God cannot exist because there is evil.* To say something is evil is to say it is not the way it is supposed to be. To know the difference between good & bad there must be a standard. A baseball player batting 500 is good; a bowler with a score of 50 is not. Where does our moral scoring system come from? Moral obligation [duty to someone] is unintelligible apart from God. If there's nothing in the universe higher than man, then what's morality? Hitler likes to kill people; Billy Graham likes to save them. Who's right? Only a morally perfect God can set the standard.

Ex 24: *I'm an atheist & I'm moral.* You may be moral, but how can you make sense of morality in a universe without God? Gravity still works even when people have no explanation for why it works.

Ex 25: *If God exists, He will catch this rock, and claims He must not as the rock hits the ground.* If I exists, I will catch this rock, and therefore I must not as the rock hits the ground.

EX 26: *We evolved by chance.* If there is no fundamental difference between humans & animals, why is it ok for a farmer to divide the weak from the strong, but not Hitler?

Ex 27: When a steamroller keeps interrupting. Raise your hand & tell them you're not quite finished. If they continue, say please give you patience & courtesy so you can give them your answer. Or that's a good question & deserves a decent answer, but it will take a few minutes. Are you Ok with that? If they continue; it sounds like you only want to hear yourself talk. If you really want to hear what others think, you'll have to listen without interrupting. If you're OK with that we can try again. If not, this conversation is over. What do you want to do?

Quotes: The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in battle. (Marine training)

Books: In, but not of (Hugh Hewitt); Icons of Evolution (Jonathon Wells);

Movies: The Quarrel