Tactics in Defending the Faith

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Tactics is about **Wisdom**.
The Value of Tactics

If you learn Tactics, you will be able to...

• Present the truth clearly and cleverly.
• Choreograph your interactions.
• Stop an aggressive challenger in their tracks and turn the tables.
• Recognize someone’s bad thinking for the purpose of guiding them to the truth, yet remaining gracious and charitable.
Tactics should **NOT** be used as:

- Tricks
- Empty rhetoric
- Clever ploys
- Attempts to belittle or humiliate

*These tactics are powerful and abused quite easily.*
When I think about talking to non-believers about my Christian faith...

1. I relish the encounter.

2. I’m willing, but nervous, uncertain, or scared.

3. I try to avoid it.
The Columbo tactic:

Use *questions* – instead of statements – to make your point and move forward in a religious conversation.
What is the value of asking questions?
“If I have only an hour with someone, I will spend the first 55 minutes asking questions and finding out what is troubling their heart and mind, and then the last 5 minutes I will share something of the truth.”

Francis Schaeffer
The first kind of question helps you to gain information.

Key question: “What do you mean by that?”
“All religions are basically the same.”

“The Bible isn’t reliable.”

“I’m pro-choice.”

“Evolution is a well-proven fact.”

“The unborn is not human, but a potential human.”
Straw-man Fallacy
The first Columbo question tells you what a person thinks.

The second Columbo question tells you why they think the way they do.

The second Columbo question helps you reverse the burden of proof.
What Is an Argument?

Claim

Reasons

Reasons
What is the “burden of proof?”

It is the responsibility someone has to give evidence or reasons for their view.

**Rule:** The person who makes the claim bears the burden of proof.
The second Columbo question enforces the burden of proof rule.

*Key Question*: “How did you come to that conclusion?”
“The Bible has been translated and re-translated…”

— *How did you come to that conclusion?*

“Jesus taught reincarnation after travelling to India.”

— *What reasons do you have for thinking that’s true?*

“Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.”

— *Why should I believe that about Joseph Smith?*

• “The universe came into existence by itself.”

— *Do you have any evidence to back that up?*
“All religions are basically the same.”
   – Why would anyone think that?

“The Bible is full of fables and myths.”
   – Can you prove to me how you know that?

“Every living thing came from a single-celled life form.”
   – What reasons do you have for believing that?

• “Science has proven the Bible wrong.”
   – How did you come to that conclusion?
Buddy up and write down one Columbo question that reverses the burden of proof to each of the following statements.

- “All religions believe in the same God.”
- “Evolution is the way all life emerged.”
- “God can’t exist if evil and suffering exist.”
- “The unborn is not a human, only a potential human.”
- “Homosexuality is the same as heterosexuality.”
- “Women will die in back-alleys if abortion is made illegal.”
Beware of the "Professor's Ploy"
Taking the Roof Off

_reductio ad absurdum_

This tactic capitalizes on the fact that some views have absurd consequences.
Taking the Roof Off (3 steps)

1. Adopt the other person’s view.

2. Follow their view to its logical, but absurd conclusion.

3. Ask a question that *graciously* exposes the absurdity of the view.
Taking the Roof Off

Father: “Why did you start smoking?”

Daughter: “Because all my friends were doing it.”

Father: “If all of your friends jumped off a cliff, would you do that too?”
“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, ‘This man casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons.’ And knowing their thoughts He said to them, ‘Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then shall his kingdom stand?’”
Taking the Roof Off

- “All religions are true and equally valid.”
- “Gay sex has been observed in animals so being gay is natural and normal.”
Buddy up and write down a Columbo question that takes the roof off (or begins to) the following statements.

• “I was born with a natural tendency to be gay.”
• “I can’t believe the Bible if it was written by men.”
• “I can do whatever I want with my own body.”
• “Morals are relative. What’s right and wrong is up to each person.”
• “Don’t like abortion? Don’t have one.”
• “I’m personally against abortion, but I don’t think we should make it illegal.”
• “Capital punishment is wrong because Jesus would forgive.”
The Suicide Tactic

The Suicide tactic makes capital of the tendency of some views to be self-refuting.

Statements that commit suicide *have within them* the seeds of their own destruction.
Self-Refuting Statements

• “I cannot speak a word in English.”

• “I never, never repeat a word.”

• “There are no sentences longer than four words.”
“Arguments” that commit suicide break a rule of logic: the law of non-contradiction. Two contradictory statements can’t be true at the same time and in the same sense.
Self-refuting statements contradict themselves.

The instant a self-refuting statement is made, it’s false.
“My brother is an only child.”

“Ask me about my vow of silence.”

“This page intentionally left blank.”

“I used to believe in reincarnation, but that was in my former life.”

“I’ve had amnesia for as long as I can remember.”
Suicide lived out…

Protestors Opposed to On-Campus Protests
The Suicide Tactic (three steps):

First, identify the basic premise or claim.

Then, determine if the claim contradicts itself.

Finally, ask a question that *graciously* uncovers how the claim contradicts itself.
“There is no truth.”

“You shouldn’t judge other people.”
Buddy up and write down a Columbo question that exposes the self-refuting nature of the view (Suicide tactic).

- “You shouldn’t force your morality on others.”
- “You can only know what is proven by science.”
- “It’s wrong to try to change other people’s religious beliefs.”
- “You shouldn’t tell people they’re wrong.”
- “Everyone’s view is a product of their own prejudices so it’s not reliable.”
- ☹ “God can’t exist if evil exists.”
- ☝ “God doesn’t take sides.”
Sticks and Stones Tactic

This tactic helps you deal with an *ad hominem* attack.

What is an *ad hominem* attack?
Ad hominem fallacy

Them

Their attack

Your argument

Your character
"If you can't answer a man's arguments, all is not lost; you can still call him vile names."

Elbert Hubbard
The goal of the Sticks and Stones tactic is to show that attacking a person or their character is *not* a legitimate argument.
Sticks and Stones Tactic

When someone attacks you or your character simply ask...

*What do they mean by that?*  *Ask for a definition.*

One of three things will be true of their definition:

1. It won’t apply to you.
2. It applies to you, but it also applies to them in some way.
3. It doesn’t matter that it applies to you.
“You’re so intolerant.”

“You’re just homophobic.”

“You’re such a judgmental person.”

“I can’t believe how anti-woman you are!”

“Why are you so narrow-minded?”