

## Session 2 – Columbo Tactics

### 1. Introduction

- Recap: Definition of argument
- Rules of Engagement
- Ambassador definition
- 3 traits, knowledge, wisdom, character
- Use scripture
- Not to take them to the foot of the cross
- Put a rock into their shoe
- Goal (use of the slider)

Personal sharing about challenges people have faced the prior week – 10 mins

**4 Challenges** – to mull over as we go on. You'll get the chance to answer at the end

- It's not rational to believe in God. There's no proof.
- Christianity is basically the same as all other religions. The main similarity is love. We shouldn't tell others how to live or believe.
- You can't take the Bible too seriously. It was only written by men and men make mistakes.
- It's wrong to force your views on other people. You can't legislate morality. Christians involved in politics violate separation of church and state.

### 2. Specific ways to defend the faith

Columbo Tactics – Who was Columbo?

- Using questions to draw out the answer

**Let the person talk** – wait to find the distortion in truth or error in thinking. People will often paint themselves into a corner or reveal opinions that fall outside of basic logic when exposed to the light.

**Rule #1** – He who makes the claim has to back up that claim.

You can use these simple questions called the Columbo Tactics for three specific reasons

1. Gather information – and stay out of the hot seat
2. Reverse the burden of proof
3. Exploit a weakness

### Columbo Tactic #1 – What do you mean by that?

- Naturally opens the conversation and puts no pressure on you – delivered in a mild, general, inquisitive fashion
- Uncovers valuable information to know what a person thinks.
- Some questions and challenges are vague – never hurts to have the other person clarify
  - o Also gives you additional time to answer
- Some points are complex and need to be individually broken down before addressing the entire statement or claim
- If you don't understand a person's point, you may misrepresent it.
- Sometimes the reason you're confused about a person's argument is because they're confused too!
- Sometimes this question is met with a blank stare.
  - o People don't often think about the slogans they've been taught to spew.

- Be patient. Asking questions is the simplest way to clear up the confusion and give you time to size up your situation and gather your thoughts

### **Columbo Tactic #2 – How did you come to that conclusion?**

Often times an argument is like a house without walls, nothing to hold the ceiling up. They just build the roof on the ground.

This question makes the person build walls under the roof to see if it stands.

#### **What makes these two questions different from each other?**

- First question makes them explain **what** they think, this one makes them explain **why** they think it.
- Most critics are not prepared to defend **their** faith.
- Sometimes they may say “I don’t have any reasons, I just believe it.”
  - o Why would you believe something that you have no reason to think is true?
- An alternate explanation is not a refutation.
  - o They are often rooted in emotion or fables and can sometimes be very elaborate, but there is still no tangible proof what they are saying is true.
    - Ask – did they give me an argument or an opinion?
      - “That’s an interesting point of view, but what’s your argument?”
  - o When someone offers a reasonable explanation for their beliefs, you generally have to ask 3 questions:
    - Is it possible?
      - Can it happen?
    - Is it plausible?
      - Is it likely to happen? – me going to Fogo’s and just eating salad
    - Is it probable?
      - Monkey banking on a typewriter to produce Hamlet. – Hamlet wasn’t written by a monkey

#### **Professor’s Ploy – reversing the hot seat – ON US!!!**

- Professor makes a claim that the Bible is just a bunch of fairy tales.
  - o What can you ask? – what do you mean?
    - Can you give us a little more detail on what you mean? What kind of fable are you talking about? Do you think nothing in the Bible is documents has any historical value? Is everything in the book a fanciful invention of some sort? What’s your opinion?
- How did you come to that conclusion?
  - o What line of evidence convinced him/her not to take the Bible seriously?
    - The one who makes the claim bears the burden of proof.
  - o **Professor’s response** – well, I can see you’re one of those Bible thumping types. Please, why don’t you explain why you think the Bible is true.
    - **DON’T FALL FOR IT – HE WITH THE BIGGEST MICROPHONE WINS**
    - Reply – Actually professor, I never stated what I believed. I may actually agree with you, but that’s a pretty bold claim and I’m asking you why you believe the Bible to be a bunch of fairy tales.
- Don’t be afraid to use your tool to immediately diffuse the situation
  - o “That’s an interesting point. Let me think about it.”

WARNING – when someone turns the table on you with a question that isn't a question like "Who are you to say..." or "What gives you the right..." use the Columbo Tactics to turn the tables – "What do you mean by that?"

### **Columbo Tactic #3 – Shaping the argument or Leading the Way**

- These questions are used to find specific information that can be used to deflate an argument, much like an archer shooting at a specific target
- We have to know which part to go after and the point we are trying to make
- The questions are designed to lead the person, point by point, to the destination we have in mind.

### **Some questions are simple but still difficult**

- Sometimes we get asked THE question, where a simple yes would be wildly misleading
  - o You say that people who don't believe just like you are going to hell?
    - While 'yes' would be accurate, it wouldn't do you any favors
    - Use a couple simple questions to shape the argument
      - I have a question for you, Do you believe moral crimes should be punished?
      - Have you ever committed a moral crime?
      - Now we're both in trouble because we've both committed moral crimes and we agree those should be punished
      - This is where Jesus comes in. he's our pardon but it's on God's terms, not ours. We can pay the penalty ourselves later or take the pardon now.

### **Some questions are more complex**

- What about someone who is trying to live the best life they can in their own religion and seeking after God?
  - o Why does someone even need to become a Christian then?
    - To save us
  - o Save us from what?
    - From our sins
  - o Right, you might say we have a spiritual disease and Jesus doing something on the cross healed us of our disease?
    - Yes
  - o Can simply believing in God heal that disease?
    - No
  - o Can trying our best or being really religious or very sincere forgive our sins?
    - No
  - o Then we'd still be dying from our spiritual disease wouldn't we?
    - Yes.

Be sure to address the problem with a question, not a statement

Bible commands us to be as innocent as doves but shrewd as snakes

Don't be compelled to force the conversation – sometimes the argument just dies and you have to move on.

Great ways to shape the conversation are with questions like:

- Have you ever considered...?

- Can you help me understand this? – can you clear this up for me? There’s still something I don’t understand...?

Maybe they don’t get the question. When presented with answers that need clarification, try using these beginners: Think about this, or let me suggest, or here’s a better way to look at it...

Often times, turning the tables will cause the person to change topics. The idea is to step outside the conversation and see where it went off track. Try to address these deviances and bring the argument back on track.

- “I want you to notice what just happen3ed. First you made a fairly controversial statement and I asked you a couple of questions about it. So far, you haven’t answered them. Instead you have taken off in another direction. Before we move on to a new topic, would it be okay with you if we finish the old one? I’m really interested in your response.”

### Perfecting Columbo

- Start using these tactics
- Write down the claims you hear most often
- Practice answering them or thinking about your responses to get them to think
- Evaluate your interactions and think about what you could have done better or asked if anything.

### 3. 4 Challenges – responses: - Homework answer these with questions:

- It’s not rational to believe in God. There’s no proof.**
  - What do you mean by God, that is what kind of God do you reject? What specifically is irrational about believing in God? Since you’re concerned about proof for God’s existence, what kind of evidence would you find acceptable?
- Christianity is basically the same as all other religions. The main similarity is love. We shouldn’t tell others how to live or believe.**
  - How much have you studied other religions to compare the details and fin a common theme? Why would the similarities be more important than the differences? I’m curious, what do you think Jesus’ own attitude was on this issue? Did he think all religions were basically equal? Isn’t telling other people to love one another just another example of telling them how they should live and believe?
- You can’t take the Bible too seriously. It was only written by men and men make mistakes.**
  - Do you have any books in your library? Were those books written by humans? Do you find any truth in them? Is there a reason you think the Bible is less truthful or reliable than other books you own? Do people always make mistakes in what they write? Do you think that if God did exist, he would be capable of using humans to write down exactly what he wants? If not, why not?
- It’s wrong to force your views on other people. You can’t legislate morality. Christians involved in politics violate separation of church and state.**
  - Do you vote? When you vote for someone are you expecting your candidate to pass laws reflecting your own point of view? Wouldn’t that essentially be forcing your vies on others? How is that different from what you’re troubled about here? Is it your view that only nonreligious people should be allowed to vote or participate in politics, or did I misunderstand you? Where specifically, in the constitution are religious people excluded from the political process? Can you give me an example of legislation that does not have a moral element to it?

### 4. Personal sharing, 10 mins

## **Defending the Faith - Week 2 – Columbo Tactics**

Use at least 3 questions to reply to each claim being made – Bring this to class next week to share

1. **It's not rational to believe in God. There's no proof.**
2. **Christianity is basically the same as all other religions. The main similarity is love. We shouldn't tell others how to live or believe.**
3. **You can't take the Bible too seriously. It was only written by men and men make mistakes.**
4. **It's wrong to force your views on other people. You can't legislate morality. Christians involved in politics violate separation of church and state.**