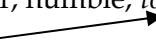


# Christian Ambassador Training

## Tactics 2 – Week 8

### Review

- Definition of an ambassador- One who stands between two parties with a message to communicate: the Sovereign being represented is God and the foreign subject is the world.
- We already are ambassadors
  - Message of reconciliation (a.k.a. the *gospel*)
  - Clear parallels to being a witness/defender of the faith (apologist)
- Characteristics of an effective ambassador
  - Knowledge – an accurately informed mind ... need to know some things
  - Wisdom – an artful method ... need to know how to apply the knowledge to the culture (mission field)- *today*
  - Character – an attractive manner
- Knowledge – things an ambassador for Christ need to know
  - Source for knowledge about God (Bible + nothing) ... Sola Scriptura
    - Avoid Ouija hermeneutics – study God’s Word! (no substitute)
  - God’s message (of reconciliation)
    - Repent & Believe (focus: the Cross, Faith=Believing Trust)
    - NOT “Try Jesus, you’ll like Him” (life enhancement)
  - Language and Culture to whom you are called
    - Postmodernist perceptions of truth, authority, the supernatural
    - Language Barrier – important to explicitly define your terms and ask them to do the same (brings us to Columbo)
- Wisdom – “an artful method”
  - Strategy & Tactics -- Strategy is the big picture/tactics is “artful arranging”
  - Faithful Tactician -- Power and Fruits of the Spirit (Acts 1:8; Gal 5:22-23)
    - Approach-patience, integrity, fidelity, clear, humble, *to the conscience* (2 Cor. 4:1-5)
  - Evangelism On-Ramp -- Good person test. 
    - Beware of *pearls before swine*--This does not mean give up!
  - Columbo Tactic -- disarming, using carefully selected conversation
    - Type I - “What do you mean by that?” (Information gathering... what they think)
    - Type II - “How did you come to that conclusion?” (How they think...)

When you are ready to go on the offensive... (*in an inoffensive way*)

**Columbo Type III** -- suggest an alternative

Have you considered ... ?  
(or some variation)

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**Third application of Columbo: to indirectly exploit a weakness or a flaw in someone’s views**

Asking the first two questions is primarily passive. You put nothing on the line.

This third step takes you on the offensive, yet not in an offensive way.

- Your third question suggests an alternative.
- Offer an alternative view that gently challenges his beliefs, possibly exploiting a point of weakness you uncovered in his answers to your first two (types of) questions.
- This last step requires you have an option you can explain clearly that gives him reason to abandon his view for a better answer.
- Examples:
  - Have you considered...the difficulty of removing something like teaching on reincarnation from every existing hand-written copy of the New Testament being circulated in the Roman world by the 4th century?
  - Have you considered...that the lack of any evidence what-so-ever for abiogenesis (life from non-life – life arising initially from inanimate matter) might count against the General Theory of Evolution?
  - Have you considered...that the existence of evil is actually evidence *for* the existence of God, not against it? (*yes – we cover this later!*)
  - Have you considered...that if the Bible were “merely written by men” it would be very hard to account for the fulfilled prophecies?
  - Have you considered...that having a “burning in the bosom” about the Book of Mormon may not be an adequate test to know if it is from God or not?
  - Have you considered...that if partial-birth abortion is morally acceptable, it’s going to be hard to condemn infanticide, since the only difference between the two is the baby’s location – partially out of the womb or completely out?
  - Have you considered...that if Jesus was wrong about His oft repeated claim He was the unique means of salvation, it then becomes difficult to call Him a good man, a prophet, or a wise religious teacher?

*For these, you needed to know some things.*

- *These examples require some ability to recognize flaws.* We’ll look at some of those in a moment.
- *These examples require some knowledge of an alternative.*

What if you don’t recognize the flaw or know an alternative to propose?

- Don’t go on the offensive... Stick with Columbo type I & II
- You may not want to because you don’t know where to go next. That’s okay.
  - If you don’t have the resources to go further, consider it a fruitful, interactive learning experience that gives you greater understanding to prepare you for your next encounter.
  - You don’t always have to hit a home run. Sometimes just getting on base will do, and the first two questions accomplish that. You don’t know what God’s Spirit is doing in

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this person's life. Be faithful and trust God. You may be watering where someone else has sown. And soon God will send someone else to reap the harvest.

Homework Challenge: Look up the following texts to see if Jesus ever used questions to “go on the offensive” (take the initiative) in conversation: Luke 20:22-26; Matthew 21:28-32; Luke 20:2-8; also note the many instances he brought knowledge of sin by indirect use of the law (Go, call your husband... --John 4:16)

## The Suicide Tactic-- exposing arguments that self-destruct

**The suicide tactic makes capital of the tendency of many arguments to self-destruct when given the opportunity.**

- They express contradictory concepts.
- The apologist's job is simply to point this out and then watch the view quietly commit suicide.
- These are commonly known as self-refuting arguments. For example...
  - “I cannot speak a word in English.” (This is self-refuting when spoken in English.)
  - “There are no sentences more than five words in length.” (This sentence is more than five words in length.)
- Note that in self-refuting statements, the minute you say them they become false.
  1. Even when such statements initially appear true, they're still false.
  2. They are necessarily false. They can't be true in any possible world.

*If the exact same reasons used to defeat an opponent's view defeats the reasons themselves, then the view is self-defeating and commits suicide.*

- **Views that commit this kind of suicide are sometimes obvious.**
  1. “There are no absolutes.” Are you sure? “Absolutely.”
  2. “You can't know anything for sure.” Are you sure about that? “Yes.”
  3. “There is no truth.” Is that statement true? “Yes.” (I.e., “It's true that there is no truth.”)
  4. “Don't take anyone's advice on that issue.” Is that your advice to me?
- **Sometimes suicide is a little subtler:**
  1. “You shouldn't force your morality on me.” --“Why Not?”
    - Usually his response is going to be an example of him forcing his morality on you.
    - He must state a moral rule to make sense out of his objection, yet at the same time he denies that moral rules exist.
    - **It's like saying, “There are no moral rules. Here's one.” This is self-refuting.**
  2. “Question Authority!” --“Who Says?”
  3. “Who are you to say?” --“Who are you to ask the question?”
    - Challenging another's view is wrong.
    - But the statement itself is a challenge.

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## *Suicide Tactic Exercise*

I. Alone or in a group, pick one or two of the following statements you might hear. See if you can recognize the self-refutation. How might you graciously phrase a response? *Extra credit if you can phrase it as a Columbo question!*

Example:

**“I’ll give you three good reasons you can’t use logic to find truth.”**

- So you want to use logic to disprove logic?

**“It’s wrong to try to change other people’s religious beliefs.”**

- If you think this is wrong, then why are you trying to change my religious beliefs about missionary work, evangelism, and the Great Commission?

**“All religions are true.”**

- If all religions are true, then Christianity is true.
- But part of the truth of Christianity is that other religions, taken as a whole, are false.
- Either Christianity is true and others are false, or others are true and Christianity is false.
- Either way, all religions can’t be true.

**“I don’t believe anything unless it can be proven scientifically.”**

- Columbo II--What scientific experiment or proof taught you that only science can teach you truth?
- Incidentally, if you can’t know anything unless science tells you, you can’t know what you had for breakfast unless someone pumps your stomach and scientifically analyzes it.

**“You can only know truth through experience?”**

- Oh? What experience taught you that you could only know truth through experience?

**A good example to be familiar with: “The problem of evil”**

***Phil Ryken video***

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNgT-PtM1S4>

**Usually, the objection to the existence of God based on the existence of evil commits suicide.**

- Ask: What is evil?
  - Don’t give me examples of evil (torture, murder, rape, etc.).
- Tell me why you would call those things evil and not good?
  - Evil is a violation of an objective standard of moral perfection (perfect goodness).

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- C.S. Lewis: “My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I gotten this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call something crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line<sup>1</sup>.”
- He points out that a portrait is a good or bad likeness depending on how it compares with the “perfect” original.
  - Only God is an adequate grounding for objective moral good.
  - God’s existence is necessary to make the notion of evil intelligible.
  - Therefore, the existence of evil cannot be invoked to prove God does not exist.
    - Rather it indicates the opposite. Simply put:
      1. If the existence of God is necessary for the existence of objective moral good, and..
      2. Objective moral good is necessary for the existence of objective moral evil, then...
      3. The existence of God is necessary for the existence of evil.
      4. Therefore, evil cannot be used as evidence against the existence of God.
      5. Indeed, it is evidence in favor of the existence of God.
  - In the movie “The Quarrel,” Rabbi Hersh challenges the secularist Chiam:
 

If there’s nothing in the universe that’s higher than human beings, then what’s morality? Well, it’s a matter of opinion. I like milk; you like meat. Hitler likes to kill people; I like to save them. Who’s to say which is better? Do you begin to see the horror of this? If there is no Master of the universe, then who’s to say that Hitler did anything wrong? If there is no God then the people that murdered your wife and kids did nothing wrong.

### **Sibling Rivalry – a special form of suicide**

- Sometimes objections come in \_\_\_\_\_ that are logically inconsistent and \_\_\_\_\_ each other, thus canceling out at least one.
- This doesn’t disprove them both, but it does cut your task in half and also may expose the irrationality of the one asking the questions.

### **Relativists (post-moderns who don’t believe in moral absolutes) and the problem of evil**

- The entire objection to God’s existence based on the existence of evil hinges on the observation that evil exists (objectively). Evil must be “out there” as an objective feature of the world.
- But relativism holds that the word “evil” reflects a mere personal preference.

Imagine how silly this conversation would sound:

**He:** I can’t believe in God.

**Me:** Why not?

**He:** Brussels sprouts.

**Me:** Brussels sprouts? What do Brussels sprouts have to do with anything?

**He:** I hate Brussels sprouts, and I can’t believe in a God that would create something that tastes so awful to me.

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 31. [as quoted by Koukl]

*Relativism reduces the problem of evil to this: “How could a good God allow things that are contrary to my personal preferences?”*

C.S. Lewis: “Of course, I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own [relativism]. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies<sup>2</sup>.”

- When someone holds two different views at the same time that are in conflict with each other, there is a sibling rivalry suicide.
- Graciously point this out and ask which one is the real objection.

### **“Taking the Roof Off” Tactic (condensed) (a.k.a. *Reductio ad absurdum*)**

Especially good with moral issues

*“reducing the argument to its absurd conclusion or consequence”*

**First you adopt the other person’s viewpoint for the sake of argument.**

**Then you press him to the logical conclusion of his view.**

- Can he live with the moral or intellectual consequences of his beliefs?
- Taking the Roof Off makes it clear that certain arguments *prove too much*.
- The goal here is to show that one has to pay too high a price to hold to his view.

*Homework Challenge: Find and recognize the use of this “tactic” in the following Scriptures (Rom 2:1; Matt 12:24-26)*

### **Relativists can’t live what they believe**

- Do you have a wallet? Can I see it? [put in pocket and start walking away] “thanks”
- “Hey, wait a minute”
- “What’s the problem?”
- [*you can’t... you shouldn’t ... that’s wrong*]
- “... Why are you forcing your morality on me?”

### **The “minimalist ethic”**

- It’s okay as long as I’m not hurting anyone.
- Then you have no objections to peeping-Toms? They’re not hurting anybody.

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis, 31. [as quoted by Koukl]

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### **“Modified pro-choice” position on abortion**

“I personally believe abortion is wrong, but I don’t think there should be laws against it.” (This is the politicians’ favorite position.)

*Always ask* this question: “Why do *you* think it’s wrong?” (Columbo tactic)

Usually the response is something like, “It’s wrong for me because I think abortion kills a human baby.” But this response puts them in an untenable bind.

**He:** I’m personally against abortion, but I don’t believe in forcing my view on others.

**Me:** Why do you, personally, think abortion is wrong?

**He:** Because I believe it takes the life of an innocent baby.

**Me:** Let me feed back to you what I thought I heard you say, and you tell me if I got it right [Taking the Roof Off]. You actually believe abortion kills innocent human babies, but mothers should be allowed to do that to their children. Is that right?

**He:** Well, when you put it that way....

**Me:** Put it what way? That’s your view. If I’m mistaken, please tell me.

All I did was take his view seriously, reflecting it back to him unambiguously – taking the spin off, as it were – showing him where it really led.

### **Final Exhortations--Practice Makes Perfect**

- **Study this material and become familiar with it.**
- **Know your Bible so that you can give an accurate answer:** “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).
- **Be courageous and begin to mix it up with others before you think you’re adequately prepared.**
  - The best way to learn anything is to begin using the information.
  - In the process, you’re going to take a few hits, but you’ll also give a few in a good way.
  - You’ll also learn what the other side has, and you’ll often find it isn’t very much.
- **Push yourself beyond your comfort zone.**
  - Be faithful and courageous, then watch in awe as God changes hearts and minds.
  - Don’t be discouraged by outward appearances. A person may rebel at what you say, but chances are good you’ve given him something to think about.
    - Think of the ideas you’ve offered as stones in his shoe he’ll be hobbling around on for a while as the Holy Spirit uses them to bring that person to the truth.
    - Don’t get caught in the trap of trying to assess the effectiveness of your conversation by the immediate visible results.
    - Remember, the harvest is always a season away. These things often take time.

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