



# Introduction to

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# APOLOGETICS

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## Session X: Evangelical Tactics



# What is Evangelism?

# NOTES

Evangelism is the announcement, proclamation, and/or preaching of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), the good news of and about Jesus Christ. Therefore, the gospel is a communicated message—communicated in verbal (Luke 7:22; Romans 10:14-17) and/or written (Luke 1:1-4) form.

The English word “evangelism” comes from the Greek word *euaggelion*. Most literally translated in the noun form, *euaggelion* means: “gospel” or “good news.” In the verb form (*euaggelizesthai*), the meaning of the word changes slightly to “announce” or “bring good news.” The Greek word in its various forms appears fifty-five times in the New Testament. In addition to the before-mentioned translations, the Greek word is also translated as “preach.” Evangelism, the communication of the gospel message, includes a warning, an explanation, and a call. Evangelism includes warning people about sin and the consequences of sin (John 16:8; Acts 24:25; Revelation 20:11-15). It includes an explanation of God’s remedy for sin—the gospel (Acts 8:29-35; Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21). And it includes the clear call to repent (to turn from sin and to turn toward God) and believe the gospel, by faith.

## Why is it so hard to Evangelize?

The age old methods are no longer working in the culture today. The days of door to door are gone. The days of street corner evangelism are not seen well now. People and the culture have changed. Technology has created a different environment for the Apologist. We must adapt to this world. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 “<sup>19</sup> Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” In this I recognize that I must learn to bring the message to the lost not expect the lost to come to me. God sends us out. Christ sent out His Apostles. Therefore we too must go and proclaim.



## The World We Live in Has Changed

As mentioned we live in a new culture. One that has created serious hurdles to the Apologist. This problem in general is hardly new though. In fact every generation has had some hurdle to cross to support and proclaim the good news. Let's look specifically at a few.

First, as pointed out in session II: Truth and Logic many today (and in the world) have rejected moral absolutes. We live in a different world than our parents did, a different world with a different and relativistic value system. Unfortunately, too many people have discarded many of the moral values that make up the fabric of our society. This rejection of moral beliefs has caused some major repercussions to our effectiveness in evangelism.

Second, many have built an unhealthy skepticism toward truth. We live in a world that is becoming increasingly more skeptical about objective truth, especially religious truth. This skepticism is especially prevalent in the academic community. Part of understanding the times we live in is to realize that people generally do not take at face value what we say is true, especially if it is religious truth. It is common to believe that something cannot be known to be true unless it can be verified through the scientific method of repeated observations. Furthermore, a great number claim that we can't come to any conclusion about any religious truth. That is not all though. Our society has not only rejected truth and moral absolutes and developed a deep skepticism, especially regarding religious matters, but it has also developed indifference toward truth in general. The main problem in evangelism today is the ever-increasing number of people who are simply not interested in hearing about Jesus because they are quite happy with their own views. As a result, some will say, "It's nice for you that you believe in truth," or "It's nice that it works for you, but it doesn't work for me or mean anything to me. It may certainly be true for you, but not for me."

Third, the world's perspective on those who believe in an absolute truth has also made our task more daunting. Not only do we live in a world characterized by a rejection of moral absolutes, deep skepticism, and an indifference to or rejection of truth, there is also intolerance toward those who claim to know the truth. For us as Christians to claim that Jesus is the only way to God sounds arrogant and intolerant to our non-Christian postmodern friends. We are considered arrogant to even proclaim that we know the truth. Worse, it proves that we claim to be better than others or at the very least that we are intolerant of other beliefs.

## NOTES



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## A man with dark, wavy hair and a slight smile is wearing a light-colored trench coat over a white shirt and a dark tie. He is holding a cigar in his right hand. The background is a solid red color.

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When you're up against a tough challenger you can't handle, go immediately into fact-finding mode. Ask your first two Columbo questions, listen carefully to the answers, then dodge the heat by saying, "I need to think about that." Later, when the pressure is off, study up and work out a response.

### 3. Lead the person to some important insight.

Questions can be used to indirectly make your point, explain your view, or point out a weakness or a flaw in a challenge. When I ask these types of questions using the Columbo tactic, I always have a goal in mind. I have a target I'm shooting for and my questions are the arrows.

## Suicide Tactic

The Suicide tactic takes advantage of the tendency of many erroneous views to self-destruct. These are called self-refuting views. They collide with themselves and quickly expire. Your job is to notice when this happens and simply point it out. Though self-refuting statements take different forms, all suicidal views involve contradictions. You will know if a view is suicidal if it either explicitly or implicitly conflicts with itself. Implicit contradictions are sometimes difficult to spot because they are hidden.

### Formal Suicide Tactic

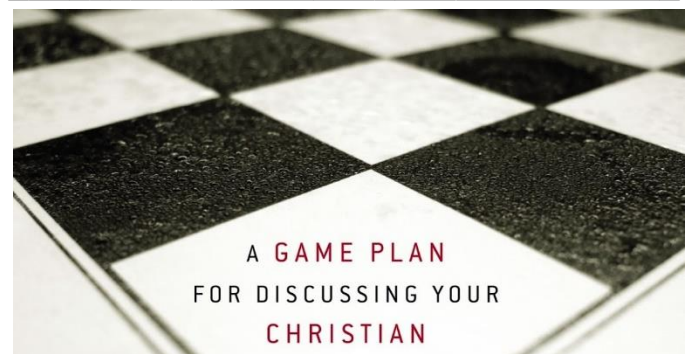
These are views that express contradictory concepts in a very straightforward way. Many of which we have discussed:

- "There is no truth." (*Is this statement true?*)
- "There are no absolutes." (*Is this an absolute?*)
- "No one can know any truth about religion." (*How do you know this religious truth?*)
- "You can't know anything for sure." (*Are you sure about that?*)

Sometimes the suicide is more subtle. For example, the claim that science is the only legitimate way of finding truth sounds good until someone asks, "What scientific evidence proves this statement true?" Since no scientific evidence proves science is the only way to know truth, the view self-destructs.

In the same way, assertions like this one posted in a university lawn- "It's not wrong to think you're right, but it's not right to think others are wrong" -are dead on arrival.

## NOTES





## Practical Suicide Tactic

Some points of view fail the pragmatic test. They simply cannot work in real-life application. There is no logical problem, just a practical one. You can hold the view, but when you promote it you lapse into contradiction.

The challenge, "You shouldn't force your morality on me" self-destructs because it's actually an example of that person "forcing" their morality on you (notice the phrase "you shouldn't"). It's like saying, "You shouldn't be telling people what they shouldn't be doing." This is self-refuting in practice.

The claim, "It's wrong to try to change other people's religious beliefs," is usually an example of Practical Suicide. When used as an objection against the Christian's missionary impulse, it's an attempt to change the Christian's own religious beliefs.

## Sibling Rivalry Tactic

Sometimes objections come in pairs that are logically inconsistent and oppose each other, thus canceling out at least one. This doesn't disprove them both, but it does cut your task in half and sometimes functions to silence both objections. It also may expose the irrationality of the one asking the questions.

Relativists commit sibling rivalry suicide when they complain about the problem of evil. A moral relativist is one who denies objective morality. Yet the entire objection to God based on evil hinges on evil being objective, not relative. Either evil is real and must be accounted for by theists, or morals are relative and there is no true evil to complain about. Relativists can't have it both ways. Their complaint about evil is suicidal.

## Taking the Roof Off

Some points of view lead to unusual-even irrational-results when played out consistently. This tactic helps you test the accuracy of someone's worldview "map" by showing that his particular position leads to absurdity. This is also known as *reductio ad absurdum*, or reducing an argument to its absurd conclusion or consequence.

First, adopt the other person's viewpoint for the sake of argument. Next, give the idea a test drive. Try to determine the implications that their reasoning has for other issues. Where will you end up if you follow his rationale faithfully to its logical end? Then, using well-placed questions (Columbo), help them see the error.

## NOTES



Some Christians oppose capital punishment because Jesus would forgive. On this reasoning, though, any punishment for criminals would be wrong because one could always argue, "Jesus would forgive." This seems absurd, especially when Scripture states that government is meant to punish evildoers, not forgive them (1 Pet. 2:14).

Some people believe abortion is wrong for them because they believe it kills a baby, but think it's wrong to "impose" this personal belief on others (the politician's favorite "modified pro-choice" view). Counter by taking the roof off. "So, you really believe that abortion kills an innocent baby, but you also think mothers should be legally allowed to do this to their own children. Right?" As you can see, this view is morally absurd.

Steamroller is a defensive maneuver used against people who try to overpower you with interruptions or roll over you with the force of their personalities. They take advantage of the fact that it's easier to ask the hard question than to patiently listen to the answer.

Because steamrollers are so aggressive, you must manage them aggressively. You don't need to be rude, but you do need to be firm. Follow these steps, being careful not to let hostility creep into your voice. Stay focused and gracious, but stay in control.

Find a pause in the conversation and ask politely but directly for permission to finish your point: "I need a moment to explain myself. Is that okay?" Notice the negotiation here. You make a petition, and they grant it. Sometimes this is all that's needed.

If this doesn't work, confront the rudeness directly, but with integrity. Say some-thing like, "I'd love to respond to you, but you keep breaking in. Do you really want an answer? I can't continue unless I know you'll listen. When I'm done, it's your turn. Is that okay?" Wait for a response.

If the first two steps fail, politely abandon the enterprise. Not everyone deserves an answer (Matt. 7:6). Save your energy for more productive encounters.

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The Rhodes Scholar tactic helps us distinguish between what a scholar (or other expert) claims and the reasons for his claims. Just because a person is an authority doesn't mean their reasoning is right. This is also sometimes called the fallacy of expert witness.

How should you respond when someone quotes an authority ("Scholars say ..." or "Theologians hold ...")? Always ask, "What are the specific reasons for their opinion?" Find out the reasons and you'll be in a better position to assess the conclusions yourself.

For example, liberal theologians often disregard any evidence for Jesus' resurrection. But when you ask why they're so dismissive, they say Jesus couldn't have risen from the dead because miracles are impossible. Notice that this view is not based on good reasoning, but rather on naturalistic presuppositions. The evidence doesn't matter.

## Sticks and Stones

Sometimes the first response from people who disagree with you is to call you a name (e.g., "racist," "homophobe," "intolerant") instead of dealing with the point you're advancing. This is not a legitimate response to your ideas, yet it's a ploy getting more popular every day in our culture.

The key to the Sticks and Stones tactic is to flush out the personal attack by simply asking for a definition of the name you're being called ("What do you mean by that?"), then asking why they are choosing to attack you personally instead of addressing the issue. By getting them to define the word clearly, it's easier to show them they are resorting to personal attacks (ad hominem), not careful thinking, to "win" the argument.

This approach can sometimes have interesting results:

He: "You're intolerant."

Me: "What do you mean by that?"

He: "You think you're right and others are wrong."

Me: "Do you think I'm wrong and your own view on this issue is right?"

He: "Of course."

Me: "Why is it that when I think I'm right then I'm intolerant, but when you think you're right there's no problem? What am I missing here?"





# Just the Facts, Ma'am

This tactic is effective because many challenges to Christianity are based on bad information and can be overcome by a simple appeal to the facts. If you know them, or can at least show that the truth is being twisted, then you can beat the objection. First, isolate the specific claim that drives the challenge. Separate that precise point or points from the rest of the rhetoric. Next, ask if the assertion is accurate. Did they get their facts right? Does anything about the claim seem unlikely or implausible on its face?

Take the common charge, "More blood has been shed in the name of God than any other cause." Even if this were true it would tell you nothing about God's existence or the truth of Christianity. But it's not even true. Lenin, Stalin, and Mao exterminated more than 100 million people in the 20th century. Their institutionalized atheism led to unprecedented loss of human life. The fact of history is that the greatest evil has not come from zeal for God, but from the conviction, there is no God to answer to.

Sometimes pacifists cite the Fifth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," to show that the Bible supports their cause. Their facts are wrong, though. Hebrew (like English) distinguishes between killing and murder. Ex. 20:13 actually reads, "Thou shalt not murder", that is, don't take human life without proper justification. Since not all killing is murder, biblically, it's clear the Bible does not prohibit taking human life.

Making the most of our opportunities is for the whole body of Christ. Evangelism is not something only seminary students. Every Christian has a testimony to share of who are in Christ, which can be very effective when witnessing to atheist's and non-Christians.

It is a matter of the heart, prayer, and obedience. Jesus said go to all nations and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). Peter taught that we are to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts and to always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks us of the hope that is in us with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). We need to learn how to set our minds on the things above, for they are much better (Colossians 3:1-4). Paul asked for the Colossians to pray for him to have the words to share when he spoke to people. We should also pray for one another, and we should ask for people to pray for us. May we heed what Paul said in Colossians 3:17: *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”* If we do this, we will be people of prayer and we will make the most of our opportunities.

# NOTES

