

How Do We Navigate Difficult Questions

Matthew 10:16; Colossians 4:5–6

Think like an ambassador guiding a conversation. The goal is to give someone something worth thinking about—a “pebble in the shoe.” Depend on the Holy Spirit, not cleverness.

Strategy concerns what we believe and the evidence for it. Tactics concern how we navigate the conversation.

1 The Columbo tactic

- Clarify — “What do you _____ by that?” Discover WHAT the person believes. Define terms, prevent misunderstanding, and move from slogans to substance.
- Justify — “What are your _____ for saying that?” Discover WHY the person believes it. An assertion is not an argument; whoever makes a claim should support it.
- Challenge — “Have you _____...?” Gently ask about an inconsistency or offer a counterexample. Give them something to consider without humiliating them.

Be wise enough to ask the right question. Be harmless enough to ask it the right way.

2 Put it into _____

Claim: “There is no absolute truth.”

- Clarify: “What do you mean by no absolute truth?”
- Justify: “How did you come to that conclusion?”
- Challenge: “Isn’t ‘there is no absolute truth’ itself an absolute truth?”

Claim: “Science has disproven God.”

- Clarify what “disproven” means and ask what evidence supports the claim.
- Challenge: “Can science test something outside of nature?” Consider whether the claim reaches beyond what the method can test.

Notes

READY APOLOGETICS WEEKEND

KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE AND HOW TO ANSWER

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2 Put it into practice (*continued*)

Claim: “If God is good, why is there evil?”

- Listen first. This may be a hurt before it is an argument.
- Clarify: “What kind of suffering are you thinking about?”
- Justify: “How does the existence of evil disprove God’s existence?”
- Challenge: “If there is no God, what makes something objectively evil?” The question raises the need for a moral standard.

Claim: “Love is love. Disagreement is hate.”

- Clarify what love means and ask why disagreement must equal hate.
- Challenge: “Can I disagree with someone’s choices and still genuinely care about them?” Disagreement and dehumanization are different.

3 When I do not know the _____

“That’s a good question. I haven’t thought enough about that to give you a good answer. Let me think about it and get back to you.”

Anticipate questions. Reflect on what caught you unprepared. Practice how you could respond next time.

4 Watch for self defeating _____

- “There is no truth.” → “Is that statement true?”
- “We can’t know anything for sure.” → “Are you sure?”
- “We can’t know truth about religion.” → “How do you know that truth about religion?”

Notes
