

How to Discuss Your Christian Convictions The Columbo Tactic

Intro

I believe all of us want to make a difference in people's lives for the kingdom of God.

How many of you would say you have a burden for your unsaved friends to be saved?

How many of you would like to get into spiritual conversations with your friends?

Why is it that we so often don't?

(fear of rejection, fear of being asked a question you can't answer, don't know the best way to get the conversation started)

We are going to start a series on how to discuss your Christian convictions. This series isn't about how to defend your faith (apologetics) as much as it is about how to have a good conversation.

I. We are ambassadors 2 Cor. 5:20

A. What is an ambassador?

They are an official diplomat sent by a country as its official representative to a foreign country.

B. Three qualities of an ambassador

1. knowledge- they know what the home county believes

2. character- they possess a dignified and attractive manner (testimony)

3. wisdom- the art of communicating effectively.

It's one thing to know what to say, it is another to know how to say it.

C. This study is not going so much on what to say (knowledge) but on the third quality of an ambassador- wisdom on how to communicate effectively.

II. God wants us to make the most of every opportunity Col. 4:3-6

How many opportunities do you have throughout the day to impact others? (many)

A. speak a kind word

B. encourage someone

C. share a word of hope

D. share something about your faith

E. share how good Jesus has been to you.

III. Why don't we take advantage of opportunities? 1 Peter 3:15

A. We aren't ready- would you be ready to respond to these comments?

1. "I don't believe there is a God."

2. Who are we to say Christianity is better than any other religion?

3. "The Bible is just a book written by men with mistakes."

B. How to be ready

1. break down idols in your life “Set apart Christ as Lord”
 - a. Do you think it is possible that when Peter was giving this counsel he was thinking about the time he wasn’t ready to respond? He was asked if he was a follower of Jesus and he denied Jesus three times.
 - b. Why? There was something more important to Peter in that moment than Jesus. What is most important to you?
 - c. An idol is something you love more than Jesus.
 - d. if you are afraid of rejection or afraid of not knowing what to say, ask Jesus to be Lord in these areas of your life.
 - e. if you have anything that you know is more important to you than Jesus, repent, and acknowledge your desire to follow Jesus.

Stop and take time to pray.

(How to be ready: 1. break down idols in your life)

2. Speak because you know you have something important to say. You have the Words of life, the hope of glory.

3. speak with gentleness and respect backed by your lifestyle. I Peter. 3:15b-16

IV. The goal- plant seeds 1 Cor. 3:5-8

- A. Before a harvest, there has to be a season of gardening- cultivating, fertilizing, planting, watering.
- B. Who is responsible for reaping? “God made it grow”
- C. Our job is to faithfully plant. And when the time is right, we may have the privilege to harvest. But we garden a lot more than we harvest.
- D We want to engage people in conversations to get them to think about Jesus.

V. the Game Plan Col. 4:5-6

- A. Be Wise v 5
- B. Speak Grace v 6
- C. Be tactical v 6 “Let your conversation beseasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

D. The Columbo Tactic

1. Columbo was a disheveled detective who came across as confused but always asked brilliant questions.

2. The example of Jesus using questions Matt. 22:15-22
 The Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus and ask, “Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”
 Jesus responds with a question, “Whose portrait is this (on the coin)? And whose inscription?”

Jesus often responded with questions instead of statements.

3. Questions help us gather data

Prov. 18:13 “He who answers before listening that is his folly and shame.”

4. Questions and listening communicate we are interested in others and we care.

When it comes to evangelism, people often don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care and listening is a great way to communicate that you care.

5. Asking questions takes the pressure and spotlight off you and puts it on them.

You haven’t shared any opinions.

6. A key question to ask, “**What do you mean by that?**”

E. Examples of the Columbo tactic in action

1. “There is no God”

What do you mean by “god”?

if you mean an old man with a beard who sits on a throne out in space, Christians don’t believe in that kind of God either.

Maybe they believe in a “force” but not a personal god. It is pointless to talk further unless you have a clear idea of what they mean.

2. “All religions are basically the same.”

Really? In what ways are they basically the same?

The point is not to determine if there are similarities between religions (there often are) but whether the similarities are weightier than the differences. After all, God cannot be both a personal being (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) and a non-personal being (Hinduism) at the same time.

3. “The Bible is a book written by men and full of mistakes.”

What are the mistakes in the Bible?

How do you think the Bible was altered?

How often do you think mistakes were made?

4. “There can’t be a good God with evil in the world.”

How do you know what is good or evil?

What do you think God should do with evil?

F. The Columbo question accomplishes five objectives:

1. it immediately engages your friends in an interactive way

2. it shows genuine interest in their views

3. it forces them to think more precisely and carefully

4. it gives you valuable information about their position

5. it puts you in the drivers seat of the conversation

VI. Conclusion- Review

A. We are God’s ambassadors on earth to represent Him and His agenda

B. God wants us to make the most of every opportunity and so we need to be prepared to speak up

C. We have all kinds of opportunities daily to make a difference by planting seeds. We have the Words of life.

D. To be ready we need to be following Jesus in our hearts and actions

E. The game plan isn't necessarily to have all the answers, but to engage our friends by asking them good questions that make them think more deeply about Jesus.

F. Ask the question, **"What do you mean by that?"**

Application

1. Are you ready to respond -to take advantage of opportunities in your life?

Is Jesus #1 in your life or are you loving something/someone else more?

If not, you need to repent, get rid of that idol, and purpose to follow Jesus.

2. Do you believe that you have the words of life and that without Christ your friends will be separated from God for eternity?

3. Will you purpose to practice the Columbo Tactic daily by asking, "What do you mean by that?" Use questions to plant seeds.

Small groups questions

1. What do you think keeps Christians from making the most of every opportunity?

2. Do you agree that there are lots of opportunities daily to make a difference? Why/why not?

3. What are some examples of opportunities in your life that you could take advantage of to make a difference?

4. Would you say you are prepared to give an answer for the hope you have in Christ? Why/why not? What are you going to do about it?

5. Do you see yourself as an ambassador for Christ? Why/ why not?

What difference would it make if you did?

6. What are ways you could ask the Columbo question this week?

"What do you mean by that?"