

TACTICS: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions

Introduction

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Objective: The tactical approach you will learn in this introduction will give you two indispensable skills to help you engage others about your Christian convictions.

1. First, it will train you to maneuver comfortably and graciously in conversations with those who disagree with you.
2. Second, it will teach you the art of maintaining appropriate control-what is called “staying in the driver’s seat”-in your discussions with others.
3. **WARNING!!!! TACTICS ARE POWERFUL!!!!**

Interactive Study: Pair up with another person and explain your answer to the following question: When I think about discussing Christianity with nonbelievers...

- I relish the encounter.
- I’m willing, but nervous and uncertain.
- It scares me, but I try anyway.
- I try to avoid it.

Our Need for Tactics, What they Are, and How to Use Them

- A. Our need for tactics concerns our commission to be effective ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20) “We are therefore Christ’s ambassador’s, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”
1. Ambassadors have three essential skills.
 - Knowledge: an accurately informed mind
 - Wisdom: an artful method
 - Character: an attractive manner
 2. These skills play a part in every effective engagement we have with a nonbeliever, believer.
 3. The second skill-the artful method, or “tactical wisdom”-is the focus of this course.
- B. Tactics are distinct from strategy.
1. Strategy involves the big picture, the large-scale operation, one’s positioning prior to engagement.
 - a. We will use the term *strategy* in reference to the tremendous resources of knowledge available to us to be adequately prepared to give an account for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15).

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1. In our case, Christianity has strategic superiority-it is well “positioned” on the battlefield-because our ideas can hold up under serious scrutiny compared to other views.
 2. We have an excellent case. We have the best answers to life’s most important questions.
- C. Our strategy concerns the content, information, and reasons why someone should believe that Christianity describes the world accurately, all of which fall under the heading of either defensive or offensive apologetics.
1. **Defensive apologetics** answers direct challenges to Christianity. For example...
 - a. It responds to attacks on the Bible’s authority.
 - b. It answers the problem of evil.
 - c. It addresses Darwinianism.
 2. **Offensive apologetics** makes a positive case for Christianity. For example...
 - a. It provides evidence for the existence of God.
 - b. It supplies evidence for the resurrection of Christ.
 - c. It presents evidence of fulfilled prophecy.
 3. Our Strategic concerns include a number of contemporary issues.
 1. The radical relativism and skepticism of postmodernism that denies the existence of objective truth. This would include moral relativism (all moral truth is individual or group based) and religious pluralism (all religions are equally valid and “true” for those who believe).
 2. The competing views on Jesus’ identity.
 3. The problem of evil.
 4. The ethical issues of abortion, homosexuality, human cloning, and doctor assisted suicide, and the nature of marriage.
 5. The historical accuracy of the Gospels.

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Introduction Part II

TACTICS:
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Objective: To ensure student clearly understands the difference between strategies and tactics when discussing their Christian convictions.

Interactive Study: Answer and explain your answer with your partner: Could Jesus have sinned? Explain why you believe as you do.

- I. In contrast, tactics literally refer to “the art of arranging” deploying one’s assets, the details of the encounter.
 - a. Tactics, simply put, are about how we maneuver in conversations, allowing us to:
 1. Use our knowledge in creative ways.
 2. Choreograph the particulars of our response.
 3. Style our response to objections.
 4. Employ specific methods in addressing attacks.
 5. Guide us with sound reasoning, clear thinking, and aggressive advocacy.
 - b. Often a clever commander has the advantage over a superior opponent through skillful tactical maneuvering.
 - c. Tactics are not:
 1. Tricks or slick ruses.
 2. Clever ploys to destroy non-Christians, forcing them to submit to your point of view.
 3. Attempts to belittle or humiliate or add notches in your spiritual belt.
 - d. Instead, tactics help you:
 1. Manage, not manipulate.
 2. Control, not coerce.
 3. Finesse, not fight.
 4. Navigate through the minefields.
 5. Put you in the driver’s seat of the conversation.
 - e. I want to offer these warnings for two reasons:
 1. First, tactics are powerful and can be easily abused. It is not difficult to make someone look silly with these techniques.
 2. Second, because the illustrations in this course are abbreviated accounts, they may appear harsher, more direct, or more aggressive on the page than they were in reality.
 - f. I do mean to be direct, focused, and challenging.
 - g. I do not mean to be abrasive, abusive, or alarming.
 - h. The goal is to find clever ways to exploit another’s bad thinking for the purpose of guiding him or her to truth, yet remaining gracious and charitable at the same time.

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Exercise: Complete the contrast and Comparison Chart.

Contrast and Comparison Chart

Strategies	Challenge	Tactics

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Introduction Part III

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Interactive Study: Please ponder and explain your Christian belief to the following question. (Partner-up). If God is so good, why is there so much pain in the world?

GARDENING VS. HARVESTING:

- A. Key insight: Before there can be any harvest, there must always be a season of gardening.
 - 1. This insight should change your approach to your conversations with non-Christians. Virtually no one becomes a Christian overnight, especially nowadays.
 - 2. Jesus said:
“Don’t you have a saying, “It’s still four months until harvest”? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying, “One sows and another reaps” is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.” (John 4:25-28 NIV).

- B. Notice the breakdown:
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____

- C. What kind of worker are you, a gardener or a harvester? Why?
 - 1. Gardening takes more work than harvesting, since harvesting is easy when the fruit is ripe.
 - 2. Maybe you’ve been sitting on the bench out of play because you were not a harvester. Now you know where you can make a difference: gardening.

THE TACTICAL GAME PLAN

- A. Here is my promise to you:
 - 1. I am going to give you a game plan that will allow you to converse with confidence in any situation.

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2. It does not matter how little you know, or how knowledgeable or aggressive or obnoxious the other person may be.
- B. It's a game plan that's simple to follow, yet is tailor made for each individual and will help keep you in the driver's seat in conversation.
1. Note these instruction by the Apostle Paul: "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. (Col. 4:5-6 NASB)."
 2. In other words, be smart, be nice, and be tactical.

Exercise: Record any questions you hear or have for discussion.

Illustration: The Witch in Wisconsin

Several years ago while on vacation at our family cabin in Wisconsin, my wife and I stopped at a one-hour photo in town. O noticed that the woman helping us had a large pentagram, a five-pointed star generally associated with the occult, dangling from her neck.

"Does that star have religious significance," I asked, pointing to the pendant, "or is it just jewelry?"

"Yes, it has religious significance," she answered. "The five points stand for earth, wind, fire, water, and spirit." The she added, "I'm pagan."

My wife, caught off guard by the woman's candor, could not suppress a laugh, and then quickly apologized. "I'm sorry. I did not mean to be rude. It's just that I have never heard anyone actually admit right out that they were pagan," she explained. She knew the term only as a pejorative used by her friends yelling at their kids: "Get in here, you bunch of pagans!"

"So you're Wiccan?" I continued.

She nodded. Yes, she was a witch. "It's an Earth religion," the woman explained, "like the Native Americans. We respect all life."

"If you respect all life," I said, "then I suppose you're pro-life on the abortion issue."

She shook her head. "No, actually I'm not. I'm pro-choice."

I was surprised. "Isn't that an unusual position for someone in Wicca to take, I mean, since you're committed to respecting all life?"

"You're right. It is odd," she admitted, then quickly qualified herself. "I know I could never do that, I mean. I could never kill a baby. I wouldn't do anything to hurt anyone else because it might come back on me."

Now this was a remarkable turn in the conversation for two reasons. First, notice the words she used to describe abortion. By her own admission, abortion was baby killing. The

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phrase was not a rhetorical flourish of mine; these were her own words. I did not have to persuade her that abortion took the life of an innocent human being. She already knew it.

She had just offered me a tremendous leg up in the discussion, and I was not going to turn it down. From then on, I abandoned the word “abortion,” it would be “baby killing” instead.

Second, I thought it remarkable that her first reason for not hurting a defenseless child was self-interest – something bad might befall her. Is that the best she could do? I thought to myself. This comment itself was worth pursuing, but I ignored it and took a different track.

“Well, maybe you wouldn’t do anything to hurt a baby, but other people would,” I countered. “Shouldn’t we do something to stop them from killing babies?”

“I think women should have a choice,” she countered without thinking.

Now, generally statements like, “women should have a choice” are meaningless as they stand. Like the statement, “I have a right to take...” the claim requires an object. Choose...what? Take...what? No one has an open-ended right to choose. People only have the right to choose particular things. Whether anyone has a right to choose depends entirely on what choice they have in mind.

In this case, though, there was no ambiguity. The woman had already identified the choice: baby killing, to use her words. Even though she personally respected all life, including human life, this was not a belief she was comfortable “forcing” on others. Women should still have the choice to kill their own babies. That was her view.

Of course, she did not put it in so many words. This was her view implicitly.

When bizarre ideas like these are obviously implied, do not let them lurk in the shadows. Drag them into the light with a request for clarification. That is exactly what I did next.

“Do you mean women should have the choice to kill their own babies?”

“Well...” She thought for a moment. “I think all things should be taken into consideration on this question.”

Okay, tell me what kind of considerations would make it all right to kill a baby?”

“Incest,” she answered quickly.

“Hmm. Let me see if I understand. Let’s just say I had a two-year-old child standing next to me who had been conceived as a result of incest. On your view, it seems, I should have the liberty to kill her. Is that right?”

This last question stopped her in her tracks. The notion was clearly absurd. It was also clear that she was deeply committed to her pro-choice views. She had no snappy response and had to pause for a moment and think. Finally, she said, “I’d have mixed feelings about that.” It was the best she could do.

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Of course, she meant this a concession, but it was a desperately weak response (“Killing a two-year-old? Gee, you got me on that one. I’ll have to think about it.”)

“I hope so,” wall I had the heart to say in response.

Lesson #4 - TACTICS:

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Objective: To ensure the students clearly understands the importance of arguments identifying why they are sometimes ineffective and other times effective. Additionally, the goal is to ensure the student understands healthy and unhealthy reservations while discussing your Christian convictions.

Interactive Study: What happens to people who have never heard the Gospel?

Reservations:

1. Define in your own terms what arguments are. Explain a healthy and unhealthy argument.
2. What protects us from the hazard of a world where truth and error is hard to distinguish?
3. How does Mark 12:30 shed light to this dilemma.
4. Explain the fear of division and do agree or disagree with this thought?
5. Explain the problem with one finding opposition hostile when their view is challenged.
6. Do arguments work? Why or Why not.

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7. How does love and reason factor into good argument tools?

8. Explain Koukl's "Modest Goal." What is the main objective and how does it work?

9. Explain why it is not always effective to "get to the cross" in every conversation.

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Lesson 4 - Part II - TACTICS:

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Lesson #5 (Part 1) TACTICS
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Objective: To ensure students learn the importance of asking intentional questions that lead to healthy and productive dialogue.

Interactive Study: What is the role and danger of using “common sense” in evaluating truth claims?

10-Second Window:

In each often these cases you have an opportunity, but there are obstacles. First, you must speak up quickly because the opportunity will not last long. You have only about 10 seconds before the door closes. Second, you’re conflicted. You want to say something but you are also concerned about being sensitive, keeping the peace, preserving friendships, and not looking extreme.

1. Pair up with another person and consider the following real-world scenarios. In each scenario, you have a ten-second window of time to create an opportunity for further dialogue with the other individual. What would you do or say in each situation?

Scenario 1: “There is No God”

The Scene: You’re at a dinner party at your friend’s home with some of your close friends from church. The conversation ranges naturally over a number of interesting spiritual topics. Suddenly, to your surprise and embarrassment, the host’s fifteen-year-old son announces with some belligerence that he doesn’t believe in God anymore. “It’s simply not rational,” he says. “There’s no proof.” No one had any idea he’d been moving in this direction. There’s a stunned silence.

Challenge: Your opportunity will pass quickly. You have only a few seconds to initiate further dialogue, but you want to do so in a way that is productive and will help everyone in the room to reflect intelligently on the issue. What will you say?

Scenario 2: Religious Pluralism

The Scene: It’s the night of your weekly Bible study group. During the discussion of the Sunday sermon on the Great Commission, a newcomer remarks, “Who are we to say Christianity is better than any other religion? I think the essence of Jesus’ teaching is love, the same as all religions, not telling other people how to live or believe.” The rest of the group fidgets awkwardly, but says nothing.

Challenge: You’re concerned about your friend’s statement and want to say something, but you’re also concerned about not sounding narrow-minded or intolerant. No one else is speaking up, and you have only a few seconds before you lose the opportunity to represent God’s view on other religions. What will you say?

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Scenario 3: The Bible

The Scene: You're riding the university shuttle with a friend who notices a Bible on your backpack. "I've read the Bible before," he says. "It's got some interesting stories, but people take it too seriously. It was only written by men, after all, and men make mistakes." You try to recall the points your pastor made a few weeks before about the Bible's inspiration, but come up empty-handed.

The Challenge: You didn't know your friend had any exposure to the Bible until now. You're concerned about keeping the conversation productive while being sensitive to the fact that other shuttle riders are listening. What do you say in response?

Scenario 4: Legislation and Morality

The Scene: You're sitting at the car dealer, watching TV and waiting with the other customers for your car to be serviced. A television news program highlights religious groups trying to influence important moral legislation. The person sitting next to you says, "Haven't these people ever heard of separation of church and state? Those Christians are always trying to force their views on everyone else. You can't legislate morality. Why don't they just leave the rest of us alone?" Other people are listening, and you want to create a scene, but you feel you must say something. What's your next move?

The Challenge: "It's wrong to force your views on other people. You can't legislate morality. Christians involved in politics violate the separation of church and state." What is your response?

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Try to answer the following questions without using your notes or the book.

1. What is the missing piece in our approach to sharing with others?
 - We are missing a _____ from the _____ to the _____.

2. What are the three essential qualities of a good ambassador?
 - _____ : an _____ mind.
 - _____ : an _____ method.
 - _____ : an _____ manner.

3. What insight suggests that we change our approach to evangelism?
 - Before there can be any _____, there must always be a season of _____.

4. What is the modified goal for our conversations about Christ?
 - Instead of trying to _____, we are going to try to put a _____.

5. What is the difference between tactics and strategy?
 - Strategy involves the _____.
 - Tactics involve the _____.

6. Finish these sentences:
 - Tactics are not _____, _____, or _____.
 - Tactics are not meant to _____ or _____ >

7. What are good tactics meant to accomplish?
 - Tactics are clever ways to _____ to get a footing or an _____ in a conversation.
 - Tactics are meant to exploit another's _____ for the purpose of guiding him to _____.

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8. The key to the Colombo tactic is using carefully selected _____ to productively _____ the conversation.
9. Give some of the advantages to using the Colombo tactic.
- **Questions are excellent _____ starts.**
 - **Questions are _____ by nature, inviting others to participate in dialogue.**
 - **Questions are _____: there is no “preaching” involved.**
 - **You can make headway without actually _____ your case.**
 - **Questions can buy you valuable _____.**
 - **Questions keep you in the _____ of the conversation.**
10. The first application of Colombo is to gather _____ and employs some form of the question “_____?”

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Lesson 6 -TACTICS:

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Objective: To examine the second use of the Colombo tactic, the second step of the game plan: reversing the burden of proof. Learn how to avoid a common trap in conversations.

Interactive Study: How can Christians think their personal religious experiences with God are any more “true” than those of adherents to other belief systems?

1. The first application of Colombo helped you understand what a person thinks; the second application-reversing the burden of proof- helps you learn why he/she thinks the way he/she does.
2. What is the “burden of proof”?

Scenario: The Burden of Proof

Often challenges to Christianity thrive on vague generalities and empty, forcefully made slogans. The burden-of-proof rule obliges a critic to go beyond mere assertions and actually give reasons for their view.

Let’s watch the rule in action!!!

- a. The following dialogue occurred on a secular talk-radio station in Los Angeles when a caller disagreed with me (Koukl) that the Big Bang theory provided evidence *for* God, not *against* God. I argued that, simply put, a Big Bang needs a big “Banger.”

Caller: Well, I don’t think it does, because you could start with a base of nothing, and you could say that there was nothing but an infinite, continuous moment until, eventually, one insignificant thing happened: a point happened in the nothingness. And then that point expanded, which is an extremely simple process. It requires no intelligence, so no intelligent God had to intervene. All we needed was a tiny imperfection in the perfect nothingness, and that imperfection could then expand and become multi-colored and increasingly complex, and soon you would have galaxies and planets.

Greg: I understand the story, and I like the way you started: “You could say that...” Well, that’s just what you’ve done-you just *said* it. You’ve just told a story. It’s one thing to “say” it. It’s another thing to demonstrate it’s reasonable given the evidence. That evidence shows the universe had a beginning. Now we have to explain how that beginning came to be. You can’t explain it by natural law, because that was the beginning of natural law.

Greg: [to the host]. This is a good call because it illustrates something: **the tendency of people who don’t like a point of view to tell a story to explain it away. But it’s just a fairy tale to**

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say, “Once upon a time there was nothing, and then something came out of nothing.” It may be very easy for him to believe, but a story is not evidence.

- b. Here’s the takeaway: Telling a story is one thing, but giving evidence or reasons for it is another thing altogether. These tales have rhetorical power, and are effective to psychologically dislodge your confidence in what you believe. But they’re nothing more than stories until they’re put to test.

- (1) It’s the other person’s job to defend his own view first.
- (2) It is not our job to refute it.

Remember: An alternative explanation is not a refutation!!! It’s not enough for someone to simply contradict your view by offering an alternative that appeals to him/her, even if it is a plausible one.

Think – Pair – Share

Take a moment to reflect on the burden-of-proof concept and the role it plays in conversation. How would you explain it to another person? What is the tactical importance of understanding this concept? Find someone and rehearse with them what you’ve learned. Be sure to clarify why an alternative explanation is not a refutation.

Now, with your partner, test your knowledge by deciding who bears the burden of proof in the following scenario:

John: The president is so foolish. He’s withholding funding for embryonic stem cell research.

James: Isn’t embryonic stem cell research immoral?

John: You haven’t been listening to those religious pro-life people, have you? They are such extremist.

James: What’s extreme about saying embryonic stem cell research is wrong?

John: Because stem cell research would really help a lot of people.

James: But doesn’t stem cell research kill innocent human beings?

John: You think embryos the size of the period at the end of this sentence are human beings?

James: Sure, they’re human beings.

John: No, They’re not. They’re just protoplasm.

James: Yes, they are. They are every bit as human as you are.

John: No, They’re not. They’re only potentially human.

James: They are already human

John: I disagree. You and I are human beings. An embryo is different.

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- A. So who bears the burden of proof?

- B. What is the central claim being made?

- C. What is missing from both in this conversation?

3. Consider the following claims and provide a Colombo #2 response.
 - You can never know anything for sure.
 - Morals are just an invention of culture; there are no objective moral rules.
 - The miracles of Jesus in the Gospels were inventions of the early church.
 - The resurrection of Christ is a myth added hundreds of years after Jesus lived.
 - People are born homosexual.
 - The unborn may be human, but they're not persons.

4. Occasionally, in response to your request for reasons, a person will reply, "I guess I don't any reasons; I just believe it. We think we have them with that response! However, there is another question that must be asked. What is that question?"

5. The "professor's ploy" is best explained how?

6. How can or should one respond to the "professor's ploy?" Be specific.

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Lesson 6 – Part II TACTICS:

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Objective: The goal of this lesson is to perfect what you have already learned. You will practice all the tactics learned thus far, finally, learning how to respond when those very maneuvers are turned on you.

Interactive Study: Why does the “Old Testament God” seem different from the “New Testament God?” Be Specific.

Perfecting Colombo.

1. What are the two times in a conversation when it appears the pressure is off?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

2. Name and explain the three specific things you can do to be ready to respond in any conversation. Explain.
 - a. _____

 - b. _____

 - c. _____

3. Think of one statement you’ve heard that opposes Christianity or Christians. Try to put yourself in the shoes of the one objecting. Jot down at least two reasons you think that person might give for his challenge.

The Challenge: _____

Reason #1: _____

Reason #2: _____

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4. How would you protect yourself when someone use's Colombo #3 and goes on the offensive with you?

Let's Practice!!!!!!

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Lesson 7 - TACTICS:

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Objective: Go is to understand basic self-refuting claims, recognizing when someone's view self-destructs, you see how specific popular ideas commit suicide and learn how to respond to them. Finally, you will learn a unique variation of the Suicide tactic called "sibling rivalry."

Interactive Study:

1. Explain what makes a statement self-defeating/self-refuting.
2. Define the Law of Non-Contradiction.
3. Explain "Formal Suicide."
4. Give an example of an "explicit" contradiction.
5. Give an example of an "implicit" contradiction.
6. Explain the steps that help recognize a point that commits suicide.
7. Work through the challenges below to identify their flaws. Each of them falls prey to the Suicide tactic. Can you find the self-refutation?
 - **Anthropology professor to Christian student: "You shouldn't be a missionary because it's wrong to try to change other people's"**
 - **"All religions are equally true and valid."**
 - **"You can only know what has been proven by science."**
 - **"There is no truth."**
 - **"It's wrong to try to change other people's religious beliefs."**

Discussion

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Lesson 8 -Tactics:

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Objective: To recognize when “sibling rivalry” suicide is taking place and identifying “Infanticide” when it takes place in our conversations.

Interactive Study:

Sibling Rivalry:

- One person states two (or more) arguments that conflict with each other. Both arguments cannot be correct.
- Point the problem out and ask them which argument is correct.
- This cuts your work in half, or they may give them all up since they most likely don't clearly understand them.

EXAMPLES: • God's Attributes:

- Sibling 1: “A good God wouldn't let bad things happen.”
- Sibling 2: “A loving God would never send anyone to Hell.”
- In the first statement God must do something about wickedness/evil or His goodness is in question. In the second statement if He punishes wickedness/ evil then His love is in question.

• The Problem of Suffering/Evil

- Sibling 1: “Everyone has his own morality. Right and wrong is a private affair. Who's to judge?”
- Sibling 2: “How could God exist if there is so much evil in the world?”
- In the first statement morality is relative. In the second statement God's existence is questioned because of an absolute moral obligation to stop evil.

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Infanticide

- A “parent” concept/claim is a generalized and sets the overall tone or framework for the argument.
- A “child” concept/claim is specific and conflicts with the “parent”.
- The “child” is destroyed by the “parent”.
- Infanticide is the most difficult tactic to understand and use.

- **EXAMPLES:**
- “Son if you don't receive this letter, please let me know and I will send another. I made a copy.”
- **Parent: You must receive this letter for instructions.**
- **Child: If you do not receive this letter...follow the instructions.**
“Everything outside of science is a matter of mere belief and subjective opinion, of which rational assessment is not possible.”
- **Parent: Only things within the scientific realm can be rationally assessed.**
- **Child: This statement is a rational assessment of everything non-scientific.**

Let's put it all to practice!!!!

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Lesson 9 - Tactics:
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Objective: to identify the four reasons for resistance to good and sound arguments.

Interactive Study:

1. Explain why rational reason can be a barrier to belief?

2. Explain the three explanations Koukl gives for this behavior and present one example of this conduct.

3. Name the defining characteristics of a “steamroller.”

4. Explain step one in countering a steamroller.

5. Explain step two in countering a steamroller.

6. Explain step three in countering a steamroller.

Practice and Summary Time