



Introduction

Why

There are two motives that should spur us constantly to evangelize. The first is the love of _____ and concern _____; the second is love of _____ and concern for his _____. (Packer 2008)

For the Love of God and Concern for His Glory

For the Love of Man and Concern for His Welfare

Who, Where, and When

While the focus of this class is to prepare you for personal, one-on-one evangelism, it's informative that we answer the who, where and when of evangelism in different contexts now that we've addressed the "why".

Individual, One-on-One

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-35 ESV)

Another great example of individual, one-on-one evangelism is by our Lord Jesus with the woman of Samaria (John 4:1-26).



Small Groups

Peter, Cornelius (the centurion), his family and friends (Acts 10)

Another great example of small group evangelism is by Paul in prison with the Philippian jailers (Phil 1:12-14)

Large Groups

Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)

How

Healthy Evangelism

Mack Stiles in *Marks of the Messenger* provides a Manifesto for Healthy Evangelism that provides a good list of things we need to know and live before we share our faith. (Stiles, Marks of the Messenger: Knowing, Living and Speaking the Gospel 2010)

Opening Conversations

There's really only two situations when it comes to beginning a conversation that can lead to a gospel presentation after you've developed friendship, respect and trust with the hearer: Initiate, or respond. With "initiate" you initiate the conversation if you're the _____ to speak. With "respond", you are speaking _____ someone has already said something that elicits a response.

Initiate

The Five Questions



1. Ask, “Do you have any kind of spiritual beliefs or interests?” or you can ask: “Where do you go to church?” Be intent in listening to their answer, they may provide clues to problems they are dealing with. Respond with “hmmmmmm”. This communicates that you’re listening and not judging.
2. Ask “What’s your understanding of who Jesus is?” Whether the answer is the typical, “Oh, he’s a good teacher or a myth” or “He’s my personal Lord and Savior”, respond with “hmmmmmm”.
3. Ask “Do you think there is a heaven or hell?” If they say “no”, skip to question 5, otherwise move on to question 4.
4. Ask “If you died, where would you go? If heaven, why?” The answer to this question reveals their understanding of their sin condition and need for a savior. If they get it right, you may have found another believer. Rejoice! You can share the rest of the method if they’re interested. If they don’t get it right, respond with “hmmmmmm.”
5. Ask, “If what you believe is **not** true, would you want to know?” Wait for the answer. Most will say “yes”, but some will say “no”. If they say “no”, be silent, and wait. They may ask, “Aren’t you going to tell me?” at which point you can ask them if they really want to know. If not, thank them for their time and be on your way. They are not ready to hear the Gospel, and it’s the Holy Spirit’s job, not yours, to convince them. If they answer yes, the follow up question is: May I walk through a presentation with you? It will take about 15-20 minutes. If they say “yes”, proceed to sharing the Coming Home gospel presentation from the next two classes in this course. If they say “no”, you can explain that this is how they’ll learn the truth of what they believe. If they’re still resistant, thank them for their time and be on your way.

Respond

This tactic for the Respond situation is called “Columbo” after the brilliant TV detective, from Greg Koukl’s book *Tactics: a Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Koukl 2009). The key to the Columbo tactic is to *go on the offensive in an inoffensive way by using carefully selected questions to productively advance the conversation*.

Jesus used this method frequently. He often asked leading questions meant to challenge his audience or silence his detractors by exposing their foolishness: “Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?” (Luke 20:24) “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Arise, and take up your pallet and walk?’” (Mark 2:9) Jesus had a purpose with his queries. In the same way, the Columbo tactic is most powerful when you have a plan.

There are three basic ways to use Columbo. Each is launched by a different model question based on the purpose we’re trying to achieve.



1. *Gather information*- “What do you mean by that?”
2. *Reverse the burden of proof*- “How did you come to that conclusion?”
3. *Lead the conversation*- Ask leading questions to steer the conversation the direction you want to go

Step 1: Getting in the Drivers Seat – “What do you mean by that?”

This question provides a natural opening for conversation, and puts no pressure on you.

First, this question immediately engages the person in an interactive way. Next, this question uncovers valuable information; it helps you know *what* a person thinks.

Step 2: The Burden of Proof – “How did you come to that conclusion?”

Many challenges to Christianity thrive on vague generalities and forceful but vacuous slogans. How do we help others to be more explicit about the reasons for their views? How do we keep them intellectually honest? The second step of Columbo, “reversing the burden of proof”, will help. The rule can be summed up by: “whoever makes the claim bears the burden.” The key is to **not** allow yourself to be thrust into a defensive position when the other person is making the claim. It’s not *your* duty to prove him wrong. It’s *his* duty to prove his view.

Some may try to offer an alternate explanation, coming up with a story that supports their view. Giving an explanation is not the same as giving an argument, or refuting someone else’s argument. There are three questions you should always ask whenever someone offers an alternative explanation: Is it possible? Is it plausible? Is it probable?

Step 3: Using Columbo to Lead the Way – Asking Leading Questions

The third use of Columbo takes us more on the offensive, yet in an inoffensive way. We ask leading questions, questions that take the other person in the way we want them to go. Sometimes your goal will be to defeat what you think is a bad argument or flawed point of view; your questions will be directed toward that purpose. Or you may want to use questions to indirectly explain or advance your own ideas. Sometimes you will set up the terms of the conversation using questions to put you in a more beneficial position for your next move.

Questions accomplish two things that mere statements cannot. Every time you ask a question and get a favorable response, the person is telling you he *understands* the point you are making and *agrees* with it, at least provisionally.



Ultimately, we want to win someone over to our point of view. We don't force our opinions. Instead, we persuade. When the steps to a conclusion are both clear and reasonable, it is much easier to convince someone because he can see the route clearly. In fact, the *Coming Home* gospel presentation that we'll learn in the next two classes does exactly this.

Demonstration

I'll demonstrate the 5 Questions and the Columbo tactic with a volunteer. For demonstrating all three steps of Columbo, we'll use the following script:

Scene: Restaurant in Seattle, Greg is having a conversation with a waitress.

Narrator: Greg is talking about religion with the waitress serving his table. His general comments in favor of spirituality is met with an approving nod from the waitress. However, a shadow of disapproval crosses her face when Greg mentions some religious beliefs seem foolish to him.

Waitress: "That's oppressive, not letting people believe what they want to believe."

Greg: "Do you think I'm wrong then?" (Narrator: notice the variation of "what do you mean by that?" 1st Columbo)

Waitress: "No....I'm not saying your wrong. I'm just trying to... to understand your view."

Greg: chuckling, "It's okay if you think I'm wrong. Really, it doesn't bother me. I just wonder why you don't admit it? Look, if you don't think I'm wrong, then why are you correcting me? And if you do think I'm wrong, then why were you oppressing me?" (Narrator: at this point Greg is playing her rules against her)

Waitress: feeling boxed in, faltering for a moment, "All religions are basically the same, after all."

Greg: "Religions are basically the same? Really? In what way?" (Narrator: notice the variation of "how did you come to that conclusion?" 2nd Columbo)

Narrator: Greg's question had a remarkable effect. Her jaw fell slack and her face went blank. She didn't know what to say. Finally, after a long pause, she came up with one similarity.

Waitress: "Well, all religions teach you shouldn't kill people; you shouldn't murder."

Narrator: Point of fact, many religions aren't concerned with morality at all. A distinctive of the great monotheistic religions is their concern about ethical conduct, but that's exceptional, not standard. Greg



moves to the 3rd step in Columbo, asking leading questions based on his knowledge of the subject, to show the waitress the difference between two monotheistic religions.

Greg: "Consider this, either Jesus is the Messiah or he isn't, right?"

Waitress nods agreement

Greg: "If he *isn't* the Messiah, then the Christians are wrong and the Jews are right. If he *is* the Messiah, then the Jews are wrong and the Christians are right. So, one way or another, somebody's right and somebody's wrong. Under no circumstances can they both be 'basically the same,' can they?"

Waitress: ignoring question "Well, no one can ever know the truth about religion."

Narrator: This is another assertion that should never go unchallenged.

Greg: "Why would you believe a thing like that?" (2nd Columbo)

Narrator: The turnabout caught her by surprise. She was used to asking this particular question, not answering it. Greg waited patiently, not breaking the silence, not letting her off the hook. Finally, she ventured:

Waitress: "But the Bible has been changed and translated so many times over the centuries you can't trust it."

Narrator: Notice two things about this response. First, she had changed the subject once again. The alleged corruption of the Bible had nothing to do with the possibility of knowing religious truth. Second, her dodge was in the form of another claim, an assertion that was her job to defend, not Greg's job to refute.

Greg: "How do you know the Bible's been changed? Have you actually studied the transmission of the ancient documents of the text of the Bible?" (2nd Columbo)

Waitress: "No, I've never studied it."

Narrator: Greg didn't have the heart to ask, "If you've never studied this, how do you know the Bible has been changed as you say?"

Greg: "I have studied the question extensively and the academic results are this: the manuscripts were accurate to over 99 percent precision. The Bible hadn't been changed."

Waitress: surprised, "Really?"



Narrator: At this point Greg could've asked, "Do you have some time for me to show you what the Bible says about Jesus's good news for you?" This provides a setup for the Coming Home gospel presentation.

Practice

Pair up and practice the Five Questions and the Columbo tactic by taking turns as yourself and one of the people on your prayer card.

Homework

Pray

- 1) That God would give you a heart for the lost;
- 2) That God would grant opportunities to speak to people and share the gospel, particularly for the three people you've identified in which to share the gospel before this class concludes

Practice the techniques we've learned today with your spouse or friends

Conclusion

Does anyone have any lingering questions?

[Allow time for discussion. Close in prayer.]

Bibliography

- Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne. "Rosaria Butterfield: Christian Hospitality Is Radically Different from 'Southern Hospitality'." *Christianity Today*. April 24, 2018.
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/april-web-only/rosaria-butterfield-gospel-comes-house-key.html> (accessed August 25, 2018).
- Fay, Bill. *Share Jesus Without Fear*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1999.
- Koukl, Gergory. *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.
- Packer, J.I. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008.
- Stiles, J. Mack. *Marks of the Messenger: Knowing, Living and Speaking the Gospel*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- . *Speaking of Jesus: How to Tell Your Friends the Best News They Will Ever Hear*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.