

WHY DOES FAITH MATTER?
Greg Koukl
Faith and Reason: Believe Your Beliefs, Doubt Your Doubts
2009 Saddleback Apologetics Conference
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I want to first of all thank Rick for the promotion from Masters Degree to PhD. That was the easiest degree I've ever earned. But we're not going to tell him I don't have a doctorate because he's going to lower my fee. So we'll just keep going on with that.

This weekend has been so hot. I don't mean hot temperature wise. I mean hot in this room. Why? I know a lot of you guys were here for earlier services. My wife and I have made most of them. We missed the earliest one with Norm Geisler this morning because we have kids. Little ones. I'll tell you about that in a moment. Darrell Bock last night, J. P. Moreland. This morning Norm Geisler, William Lane Craig, Dinesh D'Souza. I know how you guys, if you've been to some of those sessions, you're feeling right now. Like the Farside cartoon where the guy is in like math class or physics and all the things are on the board. He says, "Professor, can I please be excused. My brain is full." How many feel like that right now?

That's a problem though with conferences like this. I'm so glad to see them. I'm glad to see them at this church. And I'm in six others this fall. It's great. But the liability is you get all this information and it's sensational information. You buy the books and you study the material. Then you're wondering how do I get all of this information from my head into a productive conversation with somebody else? How do you get from the content to the conversation? How do you get from the scholarship to the relationship?

This is what I'd like to do with you tonight. That's why this session being the last one it's best, because we're going to put some shoe leather to some of these notions that we've been talking about up until now. I want you to get a pen and a paper. I want you to take some notes. I don't have power point. I'm kind of a human power point. I'm an old-fashioned guy in that regard.

But while you're getting ready to take some notes I want to say something here that surprises a lot of people. I'm in a lot of conversations with other people who don't agree with me about my conviction about Christianity. A lot of times you think about that as evangelism.

But I never think of myself as an evangelist, because I never have it as my goal in hardly any conversation to lead that person to the Lord. I'm not trying to get them to the foot of the cross. I know there is a lot of pressure in some churches to kind of get to the Gospels. Get in the conversation. You've got five minutes. Give them the Gospel.

I don't agree with that idea. I'll tell you one reason. There are a whole lot of people that get five minutes of the Gospel and they haven't the foggiest idea of what you've been talking about. There is so much brush in the way, in the way people think about this. There are so many obstacles now. There are so many distortions about Christianity and everything that you can give them the simple Gospel and you're speaking Greek to them.

So that's one problem. We need more time. What Frances Schaeffer used to call pre-evangelism, where we lay a foundation and we get our terms straight and we have some relationships that we build to be able to have access with a message that makes sense to people.

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But the second problem is there are a whole lot of people in this audience if you felt you had to go for the close right off the bat you're not going to get started.

You're saying that feels a little uncomfortable. I can't get to the foot of the cross. I can't close this deal in five minutes so I better not even open my mouth. I won't even get started.

I think of myself not as an evangelist but rather as the New Testament says I am and there are gifted evangelists. Ephesians 4 talks about that. But Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 that every single follower of Christ essentially is an ambassador for Christ. He says, *"We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were speaking through us. We beg of you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God."*

So Paul saw himself standing in between his sovereign and those people whom his sovereign wanted him to reach. And he was willing to do whatever he could and to say whatever he could to take any opportunity that he had available to him to try to make as much progress as he could in any circumstance. *"I become all things to all men in order that by all means I might win some."*

This is my attitude. So when I go to universities, I've spoken to more than fifty in this country, and I address them, I tell them that "I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. Jesus of Nazareth has transformed my life. But I'm not here to convert you tonight. I have a more modest goal. I'm here tonight to put a stone in your shoe. I want you walking out of here annoyed in a good way about something I've said. I want you going out thinking about Christ. Because I think Jesus of Nazareth is worth thinking about."

So my goal in any conversation is not to get them to the foot of the cross. There are other people that are good harvesters. They can do that. I don't see myself as a harvester. I'm more of a gardener. I think that there are a whole lot more gardeners out there like you probably, than harvesters. Some people that are good at harvesting, God puts them in the right place at the right time. They bump up against the fruit. The fruit drops in the basket and they think, this is simple. It's simple because there's been a whole bunch of ambassadors that God has sovereignly placed before them that have made the harvest ready for that individual.

I want you to get in the game. I don't want you sitting on the sidelines. So I would like to give you a game plan this evening. A game plan that I use that allows me to maneuver in conversation. In fact my promise to you is this: this is a game plan that will allow you to maneuver and be comfortable in any conversation about spiritual things. No matter how little you think you know, or how aggressive or articulate or educated the other person happens to be. It's a plan that has some specific guidelines you can follow. But at the same time it follows Paul's advice in Colossians where he says, *"I want you to season your words with salt as it were, so that you will know how to respond to each person."* So that there's a sense in which this game plan is tremendously flexible and allows you to follow the circumstances wherever they take you.

Why? It gives you a tremendous amount of protection. You can do this being totally relaxed without taking any pressure on you at all.

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Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about here.

We have some property in northern Wisconsin that my grandfather bought in 1960. I've been going there since I was a kid. Now I get to take my own kids and my wife up there. We rough it a little bit. I chop some wood and fix the fence. And I do some fishing. It's really now anymore the only time I can go bass fishing which is a great love of mine. I do it two or three weeks out of the year in northern Wisconsin.

So a few years back I went out with the local pastor. We were fishing on a very windy day. I caught the largest small mouth bass of my life - four pounds two ounces which is pretty big for that neck of the woods. I've caught three fish bigger than five pounds since then so I've improved my bragging rights.

But I was really happy with this fish. I got a snap of it. This was before my digital days. So I wanted to go to the local photography place and get this digitized so I could put it up on the screen. I was teaching at the church the next week and they could see what a hot fisherman I was. I wanted to impress the locals with my big small mouth bass.

When we took our film in there, there was a woman at the counter. She was processing the orders and we stepped up to the counter. She had a large pentagram hanging from her neck. A pentagram is a five-pointed star that is an occultic symbol. I recognized it immediately just from my own background and training. So I asked her, I said, "Does that jewelry, that star, have any religious significance?" She said, "Yeah. The five point stand for earth, wind, fire, water, and spirit." I said, "That's kind of familiar to me. What I was curious about is whether it had religious significance for you." You know, a lot of people wear a cross and it doesn't mean anything to them. It's just jewelry. And I thought maybe this was the case. But it was a pretty big pentagram, it looked like a statement.

She said, "Yes. I'm a pagan." At which my dear wife standing next to me burst into laughter. Then she said, "I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to be mean or rude or anything. I just never heard anybody admit it before." She'd only heard the word pagan when her girlfriends would call their kids in: *Get in here you bunch of pagans!* That kind of thing.

The woman went on. She didn't take offense. She said, "This is kind of an earth religion in which we respect all life."

I said "Then you're wicken." In other words you're a witch. She said yes. Then she went on to explain some of her views about respecting life. It occurred to me and I actually mentioned this to her. If she's a witch who respects life and that's a central part of their point of view, then she would probably be pro-life in regards to the abortion issue. I asked her about that.

She said, "Actually I'm not pro-life. I'm pro-choice." I said, "Isn't that unusual for a witch?" Most witches as I understand it are pro-life. We were having a friendly conversation. It didn't bother me at all.

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She said, "It is a little unusual." Then she qualified herself and she said [these are her exact words] "I know I could never do that. I could never kill a baby." I hope if you get nothing out of this evening you at least get the point to listen carefully to what other people say. Because they're going to give you things in the process of conversation that's going to help you immensely to make your point.

She had just acknowledged that abortion was baby killing. I think abortion does take the life of an innocent human being. So I had very particular reasons why I think abortion takes the life of an innocent human being, but I do not use the phrase baby killer. Here's the reason why. I do not want it to seem that I want to make progress with my point of view by using loaded rhetoric. So I don't use the term even though I do think essentially abortion is baby killing. But this now isn't my term is it? This is her term. She's using the term. So now in a conversation am I going to talk about abortion anymore? No. I'm going to talk about baby killer. She said I would never do that. I would never kill a baby.

Then she added this sentence. She said, "I wouldn't want something bad to come back on me." Now does that strike you as a little bit odd? It was sort of a *karma* thing - what goes around comes around - I guess in her mind. Can you imagine someone saying, "I'm not going to kill one of those babies; you never know what's going to happen to you." Maybe it's just a good idea not to kill babies regardless. But I didn't pursue that line of thinking.

Instead I simply said, "Maybe you wouldn't want to kill a baby. But what about other people who are killing babies? Maybe we should stop them from killing babies." She said, "People should have a choice."

What are we talking about? Baby killing on her terms. That's my conviction too. I said, "You mean people should have a choice to kill babies?" She said, "I think all things should be taken into consideration."

Part of me was chuckling a little bit under my breath. Was this starting to sound strange? "Ok, what kind of considerations would make it legitimate to kill a baby?" She immediately said, "Incest." I hope you see that what she is doing is parading out the standard pro-choice rhetoric. She's working right out the playbook. But she is not thinking about what she is saying, is she? Because she's acknowledging this is killing babies.

So I brought that to her attention. I said, "Let me see if I can understand your point now. If I had a two year old standing next to me [at this time I didn't have any kids. I've got a four and a half year old and a twenty month old. I'm fifty-nine so please pray for me! I have to say I have a sensational wife whom you just met. She's great with the kids and the kids are pretty good as kids go. Then people say, "Yeah but wait until they become teenagers." I say, "If I'm lucky I'll be dead by then." I've got it all worked out.

Anyway I said, "If I had a two year old standing next to me [we call this trotting out the toddler, using the argument for abortion and applying it to the toddler.] So if I understand your view correctly, if this toddler, this two year old, was conceived by incest then I should be able to take the toddler's life. Do I understand you correctly?"

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At that point she finally paused. And I got her thinking. She stopped for a moment and gave it some consideration and finally she said, "No. I have mixed feelings about that." I hope so!

So what happened as the line is growing behind us, we're interfering with her work production. I realized that my opportunity is now over with. So we broke off the conversation and took care of our film and that was the end of it.

I want you to notice something about this conversation. In the process of this conversation, I asked nine different questions. I used questions to open up the conversation. I used questions to gather information. I used questions to show what I felt were some inconsistencies in her point of view or maybe in the logical consequences of her view. I tried to show some weaknesses of her view with a question.

This is the value of using a tactical approach because throughout this entire conversation, who was in charge? Who was in the driver's seat? I was. Was I relaxed? Absolutely. Did I know what was going to come up next? No. But I had a game plan that allowed me to be relaxed because I knew where I was going, what I was trying to accomplish.

By the way, she was doing all the work. I was enjoying myself. Actually she wasn't working that hard either because it was a nice casual conversation.

This is just a little aside. I have as a basic goal of my conversation not to get in fights with people. Right? Here's the rule I follow: if I get mad I lose. If I'm getting mad do I look attractive? Does my point of view look attractive? No, no. You're not very persuasive when you're angry.

Second part of that rule. If they get mad I lose. There's a simple way of putting it. If anybody gets mad guess who loses? Me. So I want to try to avoid anybody getting mad in the conversation.

Sometimes you can't avoid it. Jesus made lots of people mad. But I want to make sure it is the message I'm communicating that's bothering people. If I'm being genial, friendly, winsome, attractive, persuasive, accurate - if it is the accuracy of the message I'm communicating that upsets their applecart then you just let the apples fall. But if the problem is with me, if I'm the one who's making them angry then shame on me; and I adjust my approach.

So I didn't want to get mad at her. I just wanted to have this conversation and that's what we did.

That's the value of using a tactical approach.

At Stand to Reason we have a lot of different tactics. They're all in the book on Tactics that Rick had told you about. But there is one tactic - Rhodes scholar, taking the roof off, just the facts ma'm, steamroller... these are all different tactics that we employ.

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But there is one tactic that represents the foundation of the whole enterprise. It's the game plan. Everything else is built upon that. It is the simplest tactic imaginable to turn the tables and get somebody else thinking and put you in the driver's seat. I've got a very simple name for this tactic. We simply call it at Stand to Reason, we call it Colombo.

Of course many of you remember Lieutenant Colombo. He's that TV character played by Peter Falk who shows up at the crime scene with a trench coat that looks like he slept in it. Maybe he did. He's got a pad and paper but he can't use it. Why not? Lieutenant Colombo doesn't have a pen. He has to bum a pen off of somebody. He shows up to the crime scene. He's rubbing his head, muttering to himself kind of walking around bent over, looking at stuff, scratching his head.

This guy doesn't look like he can think his way out of a wet paper bag. He's stupid. But he's stupid like a fox. Because he's got a plan. At some point you'll see him. He'll pause and he'll put his hand to his head and kind of wrinkle his brow a little bit and then say something like this, "I don't know. There is something about this thing that bothers me. Do you mind if I ask you a question?" He gets the answer back. "One more thing..." And he one-more-things them to death.

Question after question after question. Pretty soon they get upset. He says, "I'm sorry! It's because I'm asking all these questions. But I can't help it. It's a habit."

This is a habit that you ought to get into. The key to the Colombo tactic is that the Christian goes on the offensive in an inoffensive way. With carefully selected questions that advance the conversation.

Let me say that again. As a follower of Christ who wants to be a good ambassador, what you do is you take the initiative. But you do it in a genial fashion. In an unassuming way as it were by using carefully selected questions to advance the conversation.

Hugh Hewitt who many of you know as a broadcaster here in Southern California and all over the country. He's with the Salem Network. He wrote a little book. He's a follower of Christ. He wrote a little book for Ambassadors. It's called In, But Not Of. It's about 65 chapters and each is a short vignette that is meant to explain a simple concept that will help you as a follower of Christ in our culture. He's got one chapter entitled "Ask at least half a dozen questions in every conversation." That's a good principle. Why? He gives two reasons.

First of all when you ask questions of other people you are drawing them out. You are being polite to them. You're taking an interest in their life. You ask a question and they respond. They're doing all the talking but they think you're a good conversationalist.

So interested is interesting. First reason. Good manners.

Second reason is that when you ask the questions you control the conversation. You're in the driver's seat. You are directing the conversation in whatever direction that you want. Hugh goes on to explain that this could be a tremendous advantage to you as a follower of Christ.

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That's my point here. Colombo is your game plan.

The way I describe it in Tactics, there are actually here different uses for Colombo. I'm watching the time tick away rapidly here. I can't give you all three. The Tactics book has everything. There are Tactic CDs and DVD training tools out there. You can check those out if you want. There's material on our website at str.org. You can get a more expansive view of the project. But I want to give you the basic core game plan that entails the first two uses of Colombo.

The first use of Colombo is to gain information. Pretty straight forward. Colombo shows up on the crime scene. He doesn't know what's going on. He sees a dead body. That's all he knows. There's a corpse there and he's got to go from there. So he's going to start gathering information to get an idea of what the lay of the land is.

There are times when you might have gone into a circumstance where you wanted to have an impact for Christ. You were bold enough to take the initiative. But you're kind of flailing all about. You're preaching sermons that people don't want to hear. You're answering questions that people aren't asking. You're coming across a little obnoxious even though you have a good heart about it.

This is where the first use of Colombo is tremendously helpful. First, try to gather information. It's the simplest way to use the Colombo tactic. It's virtually effortless. It puts no pressure on you at all.

Here is the key question. In two uses I'm going to give you the model question. Here's the model question: What do you mean by that? Or some variation.

This is a very flexible question. What you are doing is you have just heard the other person say something or you've observed something. And you are simply gathering information to get more detail about that thing.

Remember the witch in Wisconsin. How did I start the conversation with her? I saw the pentagram and I asked her a question. The question was, What do you mean by that? Isn't that essentially what it was? Does that symbol have religious significance? I used a variation there. There are tons of variations to this question.

What it does is it allows the other person to start speaking and give you an education on their view. It allows them to get more specific about their idea or maybe challenge a view as a follower of Christ.

A lot of challenges seem to get purchased by vagueness. People will throw these things out. Like, everything's relative... There are no absolutes. Those are radically vague concepts even though there are people that use them a lot. And the Christian gets stonewalled. They don't know what to say. They haven't read the book on relativism yet. They don't know how to respond. (My book on Relativism. I wrote two books one on relativism called Relativism. One on tactics called Tactics. I'm going to write a book on God. I wonder what the title will be.)

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Everything's relative. This is wildly ambiguous. You don't want to let that pass without the question, what do you mean by that? What do you mean by relative? What do you mean by everything? If everything is relative, is that sentence part of everything that's relative? That harkens back to some of what J.P. Moreland said last night. This is variation of the suicide tactic. This idea beats up on itself. That's in the book too.

So what are absolutes? What are the absolutes that you are denying? I'm not advancing my view. They're the ones who said there are none of those things. What do you mean by "those things" that you say there are none of? Get more information.

The minute you ask the question, the pressure's off you. The other person has to do the talking. People think there is no God. You can go into the cosmological argument if you were here this morning and heard William Lane Craig. Give a presentation on that. If you can remember it. If you understood it. I think he did a superb job by the way on a complex issue.

But you might take this step. You might say, what do you mean by God? If the guy who says there is no God means that he's rejecting the idea of a god who sits on a throne out in the universe somewhere, he's got a long grey beard, I'm with him. I reject that kind of God too. That's not God anyway. That's Father Time. If you look behind him there's a sickle kind of leaned up against the throne there.

Maybe they believe in an impersonal god of eastern religions not the personal God of organized religion. Maybe they're just enlightened materialists who believe in nothing outside of the physical realm at all.

I don't know this until they explain it. If they say there is no God, immediately the responsibility is on me to say, yes there is and here's why. And that's a lot of heavy lifting.

Or I could say, what do you mean by God? And let them talk for a little while longer and it gives me some breathing room. It also gives me information. I'm getting an education about their view.

I had a guy ask me once, what's a good book on Buddhism? I said, why do you want a book on Buddhism? He said I've got a Buddhist friend. I want to witness to him. I want to share my convictions with that person.

I said don't buy a book on Buddhism. It costs you money; it's a lot of work to read it. And it's probably not the Buddhism he believes in anyway, if he's an American where we pick and choose. Why don't you do this? Why don't you invite him over to Starbucks? Get him his favorite drink over there. Sit him down and say, "I understand you're a Buddhist. I'm interested in what that's all about. Would you explain it to me - what your own beliefs happen to be?" Let me ask you a question: Do you think that he'd be willing to do that? Absolutely. He'd love to do that.

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In the process you'll be getting your education about his convictions about Buddhism and in the process of building a relationship with the very person you want to share with. Do you see how much easier it is to do that?

Sometimes people will say, "Don't force your views on me." I hear that a lot. I say, "What do you mean by 'forcing your views on me'? In what way am I forcing my views on you?" That's another 'what do you mean by that' kind of question. I want him to explain it.

I know perfectly well what he means. It's the same thing people mean when they call you intolerant. They say, you're intolerant. Never let that pass without asking your first Colombo question. What do you mean by that?

I know what they're going to say. "You're pushing your views on me" or "You think you're right and I'm wrong."

Let me ask you a question. Do you think when I'm communicating my point of view; do you think that he's right? Do you think that I think I'm right and he's wrong? Absolutely! Of course I think I'm right. That's why I believe what I believe. If I didn't believe that what I believed was true I wouldn't believe what I believe. I'd believe something else and think that was true.

Watch this. This is worth the price of admission. I am not the only person in this conversation who thinks I'm right, am I? He thinks he's right too. But he's the only one calling names. Intolerant, narrow minded, arrogant.

So I want to ask the series of questions using my Colombo tactic to help him to see that he's pulling a trick on me. Maybe he doesn't even realize it. I call it the passive aggressive tolerance trick.

People have been socialized to this. They don't realize what's going on. But you'll see it real quickly. "You're intolerant!" *What do you mean by that?* "You think you're right!" *Yeah, I guess I do but I could be mistaken maybe. But do you think you're right?* What's he going to say? All my beliefs I think they're dead wrong?

He might do what I call the post-modern two-step and say, "My beliefs are true for me." Then why are you talking to me right now? It's clear that he doesn't think his views are just true for him. They're also true for me. That's why he's trying to correct me.

So then my final question: Why is it... [and this is all part of the dialogue if you're following this] Why is it that when I think I'm right I'm intolerant. But when you think you're right, you're just right. What am I missing here?

I'm not missing anything. He is. This approach is simple name calling. That's all it is.

What if he said to me, "You're intolerant." And I said, "And you're ugly! And your mom dresses you funny." I would never do that. Because it's not an appropriate response. But how is it different. He attacks my character. I attack his looks. Neither of us are talking about the

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issue. That maybe Jesus is the only way, or something like that. Maybe we should forget about calling each other names and try to figure out who's actually right. Because this might be an important issue.

This is the tactic that is used from the least to the greatest in our culture now. Attack the messenger. Find something wrong with the person who holds the belief you don't like instead of addressing the belief. It happens on the street, on TV, from the bottom to the top. It's nothing but nonsense. Your Colombo tactic now that you see the trick, you can use that Colombo tactic.

By the way, if I went a little fast, I wrote an article called "The Intolerance of Tolerance" and you can find it on our website. The whole dialogue is right there.

So that's the first application of Colombo. You see how easy that is? All you have to ask is, what do you mean by that? You can ask it all day long until the cows come home.

There is one exception to this. Gentlemen, if your wife says, you're an idiot, don't ask her, what do you mean by that? She may oblige. Give you more detail.

Incidentally, I'll tell you one funny kind of response to that challenge. When I ask people, what do you mean by that, often times I get the Simon and Garfunkel response. The sounds of silence. Because people don't really know what they mean by the slogans they often use. Do not be surprised if you ask somebody, what do you mean by that and they pause for a minute and scratch their chin and try to figure out what they do mean. Because most people have not thought about the things they say.

This is true on both sides of the aisle. I'm not beating up on non-Christians. Christians are just as bad. We are socialized by slogans and we are emoting about the things we say we believe. When somebody asks a little bit more detail from us, we're lost. But they are too.

So be patient with them. See what they come up with. If their answer has other vague things in it ask more questions about those things. That's easy. No pressure on you.

First use the Colombo: Gather information. Model question: What do you mean by that?

Second use of Colombo. Reverse the burden of proof.

The burden of proof is the responsibility that someone shoulders to give reasons for his view. Who in any conversation has the responsibility to give reasons for their view? The rule is the person who makes the claim bears the burden.

In other words, if you say it's so then you should be willing to give reasons why you think it's so. I think thus and so and here's why. Maybe that will persuade you and maybe not.

Here's the key. The principle is that for far too long the other side has gotten a free ride. People object to our view. They give an alternate view. They make a statement or a claim. Then they

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sit back with their arms folded and wait for us to refute them when it's not our job to refute their claim. It is their job to defend their claim.

Speaking in tactical terms here, I'm not looking for a fight. But what I don't want to do is just let people tell whatever story they want to tell then feel like they've done their job. I work at KFI. You guys in Southern California know KFI, right? More stimulating talk radio - those guys. The radio guys of Southern California. I've been on there three times. I'd been asked this one time to talk about intelligent design over and against evolution. So I make my pitch. They open the lines and people who call in and try to beat me up on this evolutionary issue.

One guy calls in and he starts invoking Big Bang cosmology against me. J.P. Moreland made this point last evening. It's one of my favorite lines that if there was a Big Bang it seems to me there's got to be a big banger. This is pretty straightforward.

So the Big Bang works on my side. That's evidence for my view not his. He says, no, no. He's going to now tell me how we can get something from nothing.

It's like the guy who's got no money in his bank account but he keeps checking his statement every month to see if he's gotten any interest. Weird.

Here's what he said. I've got the actual words here. He said, "I don't think it is. You could start with a base of nothing and you could say that there was nothing but an infinite continuous moment and eventually one tiny little insignificant thing happened, a point happened in the nothingness."

That's the problem isn't it? How do you get a little point in the nothingness? It's a really small point. "Then that point expanded which is extremely simple. It requires no intelligence. So no intelligent God had to intervene. All we need is that tiny little imperfection in the perfect nothingness. That imperfection expanded and became variegated and increasingly complex. Soon you had galaxies and planets spinning out of this."

I don't know what you make of this but I've got to answer this question. I'm thinking is this guy on drugs or what? The way he gives it is you start with nothing and the nothing is like a big pond and something comes from somewhere and drops into the pond. The pond of nothing gets agitated and starts barfing out planets and solar systems.

But what was interesting was the way he started. He said, and I pointed this out to him. He's making my job easy. I said, "You started by saying 'you could say that'. You're right. You can say anything you want. But giving us reasons to take seriously the fairy tale that you just fabricated, that's another thing entirely and that's your job. It is not my job to defeat that."

That's the sense of the second use of Colombo. In the immortal words of Desi Arnez: "They got a lot of 'splaining to do themselves." (Some of you are thinking, who is Desi Arnez? - Ricky Ricardo!) So we want them to do some of the 'splaining.

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So what is our second model question? The second use is to reverse the burden of proof. Very easily done with the second question: How did you come to that conclusion? Or some variation.

You want them to take the responsibility to defend their own views. They can't just say it and it's over with. You've heard the phrase "throw the gauntlet into the arena." You know what a gauntlet is - it's a glove. What does that mean when you throw that metal, medieval knight's glove into the arena? It's a challenge right. A knight can't throw their glove into the arena and say I win and walk away. No, you just got into the game. Now you've got to put up or shut up. You've got to show what you've got.

By the same token, when there are people who have a different point of view than we have, that's fine with me. They can come on down. I'm glad to talk with them about it. But I'm not going to let them act like they win just by giving me their explanation; they've got to answer my next question once I'm clear on what their view is. They've got to tell me what reasons they have for that.

And again, don't be surprised when you get the Simon and Garfunkel response. Because it happens all the time. Because the question is charitable. It presumes that they have come to a conclusion. Most people don't. Again, they're emoting. They're being socialized to say certain things. So they're just giving you that. So you get a blank stare whether you're talking to a non-Christian or a Christian about some theological matter. You get the same thing on both sides of the aisle. So be patient there.

I have very little time left here. But Rick said this is the last service so I can go a little over. So I'm not going to turn into a pumpkin in the next minute and twenty-two seconds. And my next plane doesn't leave till Friday. I want to make sure I cover the ground here with you.

There is a ploy that gets employed against particularly students that you ought to be aware of. It could happen against you too regarding the burden of proof. I call it the Professor's Ploy because professors use it a lot.

If you are a student you probably know this if you're in higher ed. But if you're a parent you don't. You're spending a lot of money to send your kids to universities where the professors have as one of their life's goals to destroy every conviction you have planted in that child's mind.

And they'll announce this at the beginning of class. "How many Christians in this class? You won't be Christians when I get through with you." That's reality. You'll have these professors taking every opportunity, even when it has nothing to do with the material that you're covering, to nail Christianity, to go for, to put it down.

So the professor might say, the Bible is just a bunch of fables. You can have some well meaning Christian in the back of the audience and he's going to raise his hand and the professor and he are going to get into it. And they're going to have a pitch battle.

I think this is light hearted but I think this is wrong headed. Because it violates a major rule of engagement. You never make a frontal assault on a superior force in an entrenched position.

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This is not smart. Because the man with the microphone always wins. You're out done. Why do you want to do that? That's like Pickens' charge. That's crazy. But you don't have to disengage. Instead use your tactics.

Say you're a student in that classroom and the professor says, The Bible is just bunch of fables. What question might bubble up in your consciousness right about now that you might raise your hand and ask your professor? "What do you mean by that?" Is that the appropriate kind of question for a student to ask? Sure.

He answers the question; gives some more clarification. Then what other question might occur to you that you might ask at this point? "How did you come to that conclusion?" Again, this is not a power struggle. This is what you're supposed to be doing.

Sometimes the professor figures out what's going on. You're sandbagging him, right? And he'll say, "You must be one of those Christians who believes the Bible is the word of God - every jot and tittle. I've got a few extra minutes here. Why don't you take a few moments and explain to the rest of the class, stand up and explain to the rest of the class, why you think the Bible is not a bunch of fables."

What has the professor done? He's reversed the burden of proof. Why is this illicit in this circumstance? Because the Christian has not made any claim. The Christian has just asked a question. Don't take the bait. Do not take the responsibility for disproving somebody else's claim. Let them do the work of defending their view. You don't have to take the responsibility of disproving it.

You might say something like this if you're a student, "Professor, you actually don't know what I believe, because I never said anything about what I believe. All I've done is ask questions. I just want to know what you believe, what you meant by what you said, what your reasons are for it. That's all. I'm just trying to get an education.... Unless you just want us to take this all by faith! [You don't want to say that!]"

That's the professor's ploy.

There's another use of Colombo, these two questions that represent your game plan that really will help you stay out of what I call the Hot Seat. The hot seat is the place you find yourself when you are talking with somebody else about your own convictions. It goes so innocently until they start sounding off and you discover that you are way out of your depth with the person you're talking to. Maybe you're sitting on a plane and you're talking about the Kalam argument and you're knocking some things like that around. Then you've got some atheist, head of the atheist society at Berkeley. And you realize, oh, my gosh! He's a big shot!" Then they start throwing a bunch of stuff at you that you're not capable of dealing with. You're being overwhelmed because they know more than you do. You're thinking, "I wish I had never opened my big fat mouth." Because now you're in trouble.

This is where your first two Colombo questions are golden. Because they can get you out of the hot seat.

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When you find yourself in a conversation where you've been on the offensive in a certain sense making your case, then all of a sudden you're overwhelmed by a fast talker with a lot of information that you can't deal with here's what you do.

You shift immediately from persuasion mode to fact-finding mode. You practice a little of what I call a kind of a conversational Aikido. You know what Aikido is - that's that self-defense where you use the other person's energy against them. You don't fight. You basically say, come on down.

Here's how it looks. You say, "Wow! It sounds like you know a whole lot more about this than I do. I wonder if you would do me a favor. Could you slow down just a little bit and then clearly explain to me what it is you believe? I'm going to take some notes on this and write that down. You tell me what it is you believe. Then give me the reasons why you believe it." Notice those are the first two Colombo questions. That's your game plan. "Then let me think about it."

Those are the magic words. Because the minute you say, "Then let me think about it" do you have any responsibility whatsoever to answer the challenge? No. You've already said, I'm stupid. I know nothing. Give me an education. That's exactly what you're after. You want to know his view and the reasons for it. Then you take notes and you can ask some more questions.

Basically you're saying, you want to beat me up? Ok. Just do it slowly and thoroughly.

You take your notes and you get all your information there. When you're done then what do you do? What you say you're going to do - you think about it. On your own, at your leisure, when the pressure is off. You can go back to notes from these sessions; you can go to our website - str.org, or reasonablefaith.org. There are lots of different places you can go for information. You can go to books. You can call me during office hours. I'd be glad to answer your questions. Office hours are two to five on Sundays. It's a radio show. Of course they'll be a lot of other people listening in but I'll do my best to answer it.

But you're going to be dealing with this challenge, which may be a tough challenge. But you're going to be dealing with it when the pressure's off. You get your answers and you can feel that out. Now you've got the challenge and your answers and because you've done the work yourself you've got it. It's yours. The next time it comes up you're ready.

If you get another challenge you're not familiar with you say, please slow down just a minute. Tell me what you believe and why you believe it and then let me think about it. And you get number two. There aren't that many questions out there, friends. This is a great way to get an education.

I want to ask you a question as we close this out with regards to staying out of the hot seat. Is there anybody in this room even the most retiring, shy, bashful, timid, reserved or skittish who cannot say, oh you want to beat me up? Ok. Just do it slowly and thoroughly please.

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Anybody can do this. *Anybody can do this!* You use those two questions you'll be amazed at the conversations you'll get into with tremendous protection on your side.

Some people might say, when do you ever get to the Gospel? You can get to the Gospel anytime you want. You're in control. There are a lot of times when I ask these questions and I get going in a conversation and it dies a natural death. So what? God's in control of these things. I take the opportunity he gives me; I follow it where it leads. Then I walk away from it and I don't worry about it because I serve a sovereign God who's able to manage the whole thing. If I get a little bit more information, get a little bit more training, maybe I can take it a little further the next time. That's the value of getting this kind of training.

I want to see every single one of you in to play, and this is a game plan that will allow you to do this.

Final thoughts: The end of the book, the last chapter of the book, I talk about a Marine motto. Like the Marines; you're doing good work. I like that their main motto is *Semper Fidelis* or for short *Semper Fi* - Latin for *Always faithful*. That's great. That is a great motto for Christians - always faithful.

But they also have a training motto that I take to heart. When they're training, when they're working really hard, when it really hurts to train they speak their motto to encourage them. Their motto is "The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in battle."

What about it? Our engagements with those who disagree with us, I want it to look more like diplomacy than D Day. That's the way we interface. But the fact is there is a spiritual battle going on and we are being prepared. This conference is an example for that spiritual battle. I want to help you sweat. That's what Stand to Reason is all about. That's why we mention the website and we talk about the book. I hope you get the book because it'll guide you through this.

But there are lots of other materials as well. We want to help you to sweat so that when the time comes, when you're on the line, you have some confidence, you know what to do, you have a game plan. And you can start moving out forward and then you never know what God's going to do.

You don't have to swing for the fences, in my view. You don't have to hit home runs. You just have to get up to bat. And this game plan will help you to do this. It will help you to manage any conversation with confidence, no matter how little you think you know or how aggressive or articulate or educated the other person may be.

Dear Lord, I'm thrilled to be here at the end of this magnificent series, to be able to clean up so to speak, following these great men that have spoken, to offer some ideas about how we can make this practical. We can get these ideas into play. We all need your help, Father, because nothing will be accomplished without the power of your Spirit moving us forward, making our efforts productive. I pray for the people that have been at any segment of this series or have watched from anywhere anything about this series that they would be deeply encouraged to believe their beliefs and doubt their doubts and to step out with the tools that

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they've been given to fight the good fight for the sake of the Gospel and the kingdom by the power that you provide in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.