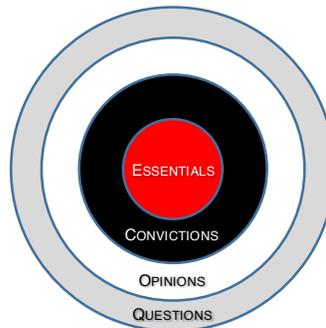


WATERMARK EQUIPPING WEBINAR HOW TO RESPOND WHEN CRITICS ASK



1. Listen. No, seriously, really listen. It is common to feel attacked or threatened by a skeptic's question, so it is tempting to respond in a defensive posture, something that severely hinders the primary objective: to gracefully engage a human being made in the image of God. Never answer a question; always answer a person.
2. Discern. We should not try to convert anyone because that's impossible. It's our job to discern what the Spirit is doing and then cooperate with him in what he is doing. Koukl's "stone in the shoe" metaphor is a sound principle (*Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* by Greg Koukl). If we view our responsibility properly then we can relax and discern the underlying issue or circumstance driving the question. This is the REAL question.
3. Ask clarifying questions. Ensure they are open ended and inviting . . . the Columbo questions Koukl uses in *Tactics* are as good as any:
 - What do you mean by that?
 - How did you come to that conclusion?
 - Have you ever considered . . . ?
4. Distinguish between the essentials and convictions / opinions / questions. There absolutely is an order of priority in belief. One of the most important things to do in answering a critic is to clarify priorities of belief. He is often critiquing a caricature of Christianity or is placing a third tier issue in the center.



5. Do the best you can to redirect the conversation to Jesus and the resurrection. The historical man and his death and resurrection is the very heart of Christianity. Critics will do the best they can to avoid the center (after all, there is an Enemy who wants to avoid this topic), so gently remind them that they must deal with Jesus and his resurrection first before it's even possible to substantively address subsequent questions.

"A great many learned men are defending the gospel – no doubt it is a very proper and right thing to do – yet I always notice that when there are most books of that kind, it is because the gospel, itself, is not being preached. Suppose a number of persons were to take it into their heads that they had to defend a lion, a full-grown king of beasts. There he is in a cage and here come all the soldiers of the army to fight for him. Well, I would suggest to them, if they would not object and feel that it was humbling to them, that they should kindly stand back, open the door, and let the lion out. I believe that would be the best way of defending him, for he would take care of himself – and the best "apology" for the gospel is to let the gospel out. Never mind about defending Deuteronomy or the whole of the Pentateuch – preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Let the Lion out and see who will dare to approach Him. The Lion of the tribe of Judah will soon drive away all His adversaries. This was how Christ's first disciples worked – they preached Jesus Christ wherever they went. They did not stop to apologize, but boldly bore their witness concerning Him."

C. H. Spurgeon, "Christ and His Coworkers" (1886)

6. Continually fall back into Christ.

"I have found that nothing is more dangerous to one's faith than the work of an apologist. No doctrine of that Faith seems to me so spectral, so unreal as one that I have just successfully defended in a public debate. For a moment, you see, it has seemed to rest on oneself: as a result, when you go away from that debate, it seems no stronger than that weak pillar. That is why we apologists take our lives in our hands and can be saved only by falling back continually from the web of our own arguments, as from our intellectual counters, into the Reality – from Christian apologetics into Christ Himself. That also is why we need one another's continual help – *oremus pro invicem* (let us pray for each other)."

C. S. Lewis, "Christian Apologetics"

7. Pray. Pray a lot.