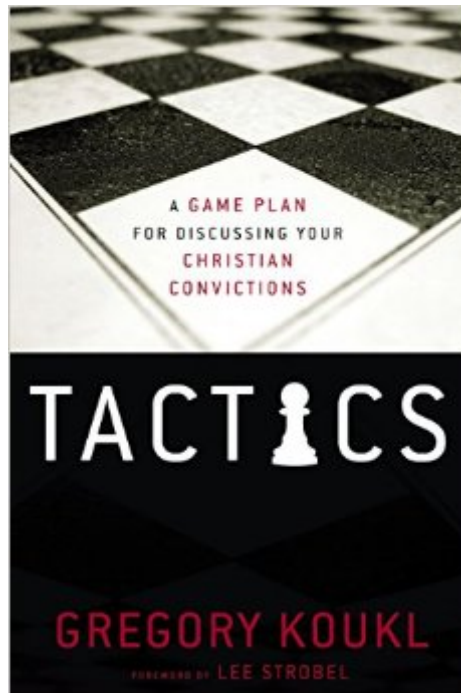


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# Tactics: A Game Plan For Discussing Your Christian Convictions



## Synopsis

In a world increasingly indifferent to Christian truth, followers of Christ need to be equipped to communicate with those who do not speak their language or accept their source of authority. Gregory Koukl demonstrates how to get in the driver's seat, keeping any conversation moving with thoughtful, artful diplomacy. You'll learn how to maneuver comfortably and graciously through the minefields, stop challengers in their tracks, turn the tables and "most importantly" get people thinking about Jesus. Soon, your conversations will look more like diplomacy than D-Day. Drawing on extensive experience defending Christianity in the public square, Koukl shows you how to:

- Initiate conversations effortlessly
- Present the truth clearly, cleverly, and persuasively
- Graciously and effectively expose faulty thinking
- Skillfully manage the details of dialogue
- Maintain an engaging, disarming style even under attack

Tactics provides the game plan for communicating the compelling truth about Christianity with confidence and grace.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This week I received my copy of *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* by Greg Koukl. I was anxious to have a look at the book, as I have been following Greg Koukl's ministry of Stand to Reason for a number of years. On one hand, I was excited to see in book form what I have heard Koukl demonstrate so many times on his live radio program: an effective and gracious way to communicate one's faith in an articulate and winsome way. On the other hand, my familiarity with Koukl's *Tactics* audio program made me wonder if this was just a repackaging of the same material. I was thoroughly surprised. I'm a reader - but it's been a while since I have devoured

a book. Tactics is an immediately practical book. The author's heart is that Christians be equipped to be good ambassadors. An ambassador has three skills: "knowledge, an accurately informed mind; wisdom, an artful method; and character, an attractive manner." Koukl describes the goal of a tactical approach - one that seeks to converse more persuasively by being thoughtful and reasonable, rather than emotional, about one's convictions. In a very balanced way, Koukl carefully introduces this approach and neutralizes some of the negative connotations that come with sharing and defending the faith. Some people immediately object at the idea of argumentation or "methods." However, Koukl summarizes a more biblical approach: "Here's the key principle: Without God's work, nothing else works; but with God's work, many things work. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, love persuades. By the power of God, the gospel transforms. And with Jesus at work, arguments convince. God is happy to use each of these methods." Now Koukl dives into the meat of the book. He presents about a half dozen "tactics," as he calls them - each with a memorable name, such as, "Columbo," "Suicide," and, "Taking the Roof Off," among others. As he teaches you these tactics, Koukl's experience and mastery in this area immediately become evident. He is not a theorist presenting untested ideas. Instead, he is a veteran, discussing situation after situation gleaned from countless personal encounters, public debates, radio interviews, and friendly conversations. The phenomenal part is that these approaches are simple and the applications are immediately accessible to the reader. One particular insight Koukl shares should bring relief to those who feel fear come over them at even the thought of discussing their faith: you don't have to hit home runs. In fact, Koukl stresses that you don't even have to get on base. The goal is to leave them with something to think about. His advice: simply leave them with "a stone in their shoe." Navigating through the book, you will find gem after gem of wisdom. So many of the common objections that the Christian encounters are found here - but with answers that are actually useful in conversation. Although much of the substance is philosophical in nature, Koukl drops the jargon and replaces it with practical expressions. This is a handbook suitable for the layman and professional apologist alike. After passing the halfway point in the book, you will realize that you are not just learning how to steer safely through a conversation - you are learning how to think. Koukl will sharpen your thinking skills and your ability to spot fuzzy logic and faulty arguments. You will realize that this is a book about truth. By the time you reach the end (it's about 200 pages), you will be amazed at the amount of wisdom, insight, and courage you have gleaned. A second reading is definitely in order. Koukl's Tactics is endorsed by a long list of notable apologists and Christian thinkers: Norman Geisler, William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, J. P. Moreland, Hank Hanegraaff, Jay Wesley Richards, David Noebel, Justin Taylor, Paul Copan, Sean McDowell, Frank Turek, and

Craig Hazen. For those familiar with Koukl's Tactics audio program, many of the same personal encounters are cited. However, this is not a repackaging of old material. I found the book to be immensely helpful even after recently re-listening to Greg Koukl's Tactics in Defending the Faith audio program. In addition to the expanded and fresh material, I found the summaries at the end of each chapter to be particularly helpful. Greg Koukl's Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions is not designed to give you pat answers or lists of facts to bring to your conversations. Far from being "another evangelism book," Tactics is a book that will challenge you to be a critical thinker, a logical communicator, and a gracious ambassador for Jesus Christ.

I have a bit of an aversion to books on apologetics. I don't know exactly why this is, but it may be that many of them seem to teach methods of defending the faith that either manipulate or bludgeon. Somehow grace and apologetics do not seem to go together as they ought. So it was with perhaps just a bit of reluctance that I began reading Gregory Koukl's Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions. This is a book that promises to teach a new method, a respectful method, of defending the faith and of attempting to convince others of the truth of Christianity. This is not an apologetics 101 text, as in a book that will compare and contrast various apologetic methods; instead, it is a guide, a book that seeks to lead the reader into a new method of sharing his faith with others. "If you're like a lot of people who pick up a book like this, you would like to make a difference for the kingdom, but you are not sure how to begin. I want to give you a game plan, a strategy to get involved in a way you never thought you could, yet with a tremendous margin of safety." Here is what Koukl promises--he sets no small goal. "I am going to teach you how to navigate in conversations so that you stay in control--in a good way--even though your knowledge is limited. You may know nothing about answering challenges people raise against what you believe. You may even be a brand new Christian. It doesn't matter. I am going to introduce you to a handful of effective maneuvers--I call them tactics--that will help you stay in control." This tactical approach is a useful one, for it allows you to stay "in the driver's seat in conversations, so you can productively direct the discussion, exposing faulty thinking and suggesting more fruitful alternatives along the way." It is important to note that "tactics are not manipulative tricks or slice ruses. They are not clever ploys to embarrass other people and force them to submit to your point of view. They are not meant to belittle or humiliate those who disagree so you can gain notches in your spiritual belt." Instead, they are ways of guiding a conversation to expose poor reasoning and then use that as a bridge to the truth. Koukl begins by looking at three basic skills the Christian will need if he wishes to be an effective apologist. First, he must have knowledge, having a familiarity with the central

message of the Bible; second, he must have knowledge that is tempered by wisdom that makes his message clear and persuasive; third, he must have the character of a Christian, embodying the virtues of the kingdom he serves. Then, over the course of four chapters, Koukl unveils his tactic. He calls it "The Columbo." The key to this tactic is to "go on the offensive in an inoffensive way by using carefully selected questions to productively advance the conversation." Never make a statement when a question will do the job. When you ask questions and listen carefully, you gather information that can be used to show a person where his thinking is faulty. Questions can be used to gather information, to reverse the burden of proof or to lead the conversation. Either way, the person asking the question is the person who leads the discussion. He sets a modest and realistic goal for his interactions with unbelievers. "My goal," he says, "is to find clever ways to exploit someone's bad thinking for the purpose of guiding her to truth, yet remaining gracious and charitable at the same time. My aim is to manage, not manipulate; to control, not coerce; to finesse, not fight. I want the same for you." The goal of this kind of apologetics, then, is not necessarily to win someone to Christ. That may be an ultimate goal or an ultimate hope, but the goal of an individual encounter is nothing more than, in Koukl's words, "putting a stone in someone's shoe." "I want to give him something worth thinking about, something he can't ignore because it continues to poke at him in a good way." In Part 2 of the book, Koukl offers guidance in finding flaws in the way people reason. He offers specific tactics to unveil poor reasoning and to turn it back against a person. He calls these things like Suicide, Sibling Rivalry, Taking the Roof Off. He offers advice on countering the human steamroller (you've tried to discuss issues with people like this) and the Rhodes scholar, the supposed expert. When I think of Christian apologetics, I tend to think of Evidence that Demands a Verdict or some of the classics of days gone by. But in this book Koukl offers a new approach and one that is well-suited to the times. He teaches the Christian to think well, to exemplify grace and to humbly lead a conversation to the truth. "We may spend hours helping someone carefully work through an issue without ever mentioning God, Jesus or the Bible. This does not mean we aren't advancing the kingdom. It is always a step in the right direction when he help others think more carefully. If nothing else, it gives them tools to assess the bigger questions that eventually come up." Apologetics is not always a discipline that is done with grace. But in this book Koukl shares tactics that will prove beneficial to any Christian. They may just revolutionize the way you interact with unbelievers. I highly recommend it.

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