

# Something to Pray About

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September 2012 – Cindy Sears

*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*  
—Matthew 10:16 NKJV

## Playing Columbo

Christians and what we believe are being excoriated in the public square more and more. We are called bigots for believing that Christ is the only way to be made right with God, and having the gall to say it out loud. We are called homophobic or worse because of our stand against same-sex marriages, and for continuing to look upon homosexuality as a sin, instead of as a lifestyle choice. We are considered women haters or oppressors, because we stand up for the rights of the unborn. The right to pray in public—anywhere—especially “in Jesus name” is being attacked and banned. Some of our government people have begun saying that we have the right to “worship” as we please, while they chip away at our religious freedoms. They don’t want us to bring our belief into the public square where it might actually change the way things are being done. Our country’s economy is in dire straits, and much of it has happened because of people who no longer have any ethical basis for behavior—so they do whatever they please for their own benefit. Christians are also said to be unintellectual or irrational by the new atheists or social elite.

So what are we to do? Do we run and hide? Do we try to yell more loudly than our opponents or say nasty things about them the way they do about us? Would our Lord want us to react that way? Listen to what Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 3:14-17:

But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

In Matthew 10:16, Jesus told his disciples to “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves”—in other words to be innocent, but shrewd. We are here to be his witnesses to help bring people into the kingdom; our goal, when confronted by those who disagree with us, is not to defeat, but to persuade—or simply to plant a seed for the Holy Spirit to use. Only the Holy Spirit can bring a person to salvation. So, let us be God’s ambassadors and face our opponents diplomatically, and not confrontationally.

In the book *Tactics: a Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* by Gregory Koukl, the author talks about ways to have discussions with people who have challenged your faith. The main thing is to remain in control of the conversation. One way to do that is to use the *Columbo* tactic. Named after the Lt. Columbo character from the television series, this tactic involves asking questions of your opponent. Using this procedure, you will be able to draw your opponent into a thoughtful dialogue without antagonizing them. You also will discover that often people cannot defend their position with logical or factual statements. Here is an example:



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."

Response: "Do you vote? When you vote for someone, are you expecting your candidate to pass laws reflecting your own point of view? Wouldn't that essentially be forcing your views on others? How is that different from what you're troubled about here? Is it your view that only nonreligious people should be allowed to vote or participate in politics, or did I misunderstand you? Where, specifically, in the Constitution are religious people excluded from the political process? Can you give me an example of legislation that does not have a moral element to it?" (p. 44, Koukl)

When I use this tactic, the pressure is off of me. I am simply asking for clarification and information. The other person must defend their statements.

Get into the habit of asking questions. "Using simple leading questions is an almost effortless way to introduce spiritual topics to a conversation without seeming abrupt, rude, or pushy. Questions are engaging and interactive, probing yet amicable. Most important, they keep you in the driver's seat while someone else does all the work." (p.48 Koukl)

Koukl goes on to explain other aspects of the Columbo tactic and how to use it to defend your faith and to lead others to see how they may be living under false assumptions. Highly recommended reading material (Available on Kindle).