

# Fallacies & Facts: How to Avoid Drinking the Kool-Aid

Colossians 2:8

Apologetics Series

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# Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

## Matthew 10:16

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

"Why don't they teach logic at these schools...What do they teach them at these schools?" — **Professor Digory Kirke** *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*



**“Freedom can only exist in the  
society of knowledge”** – On the steps of  
the courthouse in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

# How to detect logical fallacies

- Logical fallacies often arise when people are contending for truth. Here's a few tips on how to detect and avoid them...

# 1) Tautology: A Self-evident Truth

- A tautology is defined as a trivial truth that does not give any new information, but is offered as a false sense of agreement. The perpetrator will make a statement such as, "a rose is a rose," or, "become what you are." It is a self-evident truth, but it doesn't refute or repudiate any thesis. In short, it is a dodge offered to divert your attention or get you to agree on a point that isn't really in dispute.

## 2) Ad Hominem: Attack the Person

- An attack on you, or those you admire, instead of dealing with the facts. It is the ultimate act of desperation, because when a person is completely out of arguments, their last resort is to attack their opponent.
  - Example: You are so stupid your argument couldn't possibly be true.
  - Example: I figured that you couldn't possibly get it right, so I ignored your comment.
  - Example: Jerry Falwell Sr. was intolerant! If you're a Christian, you are too!
  - Example: What else could you expect from an evangelical, Bible-believing, conservative Christian?

Q: What effect is an *ad hominem* intended to produce?

### 3) Red Herring: An Irrelevant Argument

- A red herring is a methodology of raising in irrelevant issue that has nothing to do with the argument at hand.
  - “I won’t become a Christian because Christians hate homosexuals!”
  - “I won’t become a Christian because there are hypocrites in the church.”

Q: What does this have to do with whether Jesus rose from the dead?

## 4) Beg the Question: Circular Reasoning

- When a person offers a proposition as truth, and then seeks to prove it by that same argument, that is circular reasoning.
  - Example: “God exists because He said He does in the Bible.”

Q: What is wrong with using this argument?

A: We are trying to prove a point by offering evidence to which they have not agreed yet.

## 5) Non Sequitur: An Assumption of Fact

- A conclusion that doesn't follow the premises.
  - “We know why it rained today: because I washed my car.”
  - “I don't care what you say. We don't need any more bookshelves. As long as the carpet is clean, we are fine.”
  - “If you do not buy this type of pet food, you do not love your pet and you are a bad owner.”
  - “The Bible has errors. Therefore, Christianity isn't true & Jesus didn't rise from the dead.”

## 6) Appeal to Unqualified Authority: Celebrity Endorsements

- Does it matter for whom that celebrity is going to vote?
- Just because a famous sports figure holds a certain position, does that necessarily mean that they are an authority on the subject?



## 7) Guilt by Association

- Guilt by Association is often used alongside personal attacks.
- Example: “Robert Tilton (TV ‘evangelist’) is a crook. Therefore, all churches/Christians are crooked”
- Luke 15:1-2 *Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”*

## 8) Equivocation

- Shifting the definitions
  - Example: “Evolution is gradual change over time.....Evolution is an unguided, purposeless, change producing order from chaos.”

## 9) Ad Populum (Appeal to Popularity)

- “The majority of people today believe there is more than one way to heaven...so you should as well.”

## 10) Appeal to Pity

- **Urging the hearer to accept the argument based upon an appeal to emotions, sympathy, etc.**
- Example: You owe me big time because I really stuck my neck out for you.
- Example: Hell cannot be real because the suffering there is so terrible.

# 11) Genetic Fallacy

- Attempting to endorse or disqualify a claim because of the origin or irrelevant history of the claim
  - Example: “Religion came about as the result of human evolution trying to make sense of the universe.”

Q: Even if this is true, does it disprove God’s existence?

1 Thessalonians 5:21

“but test everything;  
hold fast what is good.”

Questions?