

The Cultworld: Evangelism In The Forgotten Harvest

By Rev. Rafael D Martinez, Spiritwatch Ministries (www.spiritwatch.org)

Witnessing to the cultists at our door and in our worlds is not beyond us. We have been charged to preach the Gospel to "every creature", and as we've seen, that includes them. The Spirit of God is waiting to use you to do just that, quite able to make us *more* than conquerors in this enterprise. He's waiting to make us fruitful witnesses for our Lord Jesus Christ before any and ever cultist you will encounter. It is my prayer that you will obey as well as trust in His ability to use you to be a laborer in that forgotten harvest field of the Cultworld.

Our personal preparation for cult evangelism must engage our minds as well as our hearts, and requires that we take being ambassadors for Christ very seriously. Ambassadors are the official representatives of a nation in other nations. They represent the interests and position of the people they have been commissioned to represent. They serve as messengers and mediators, and can only do so most successfully as they become familiar with the worldview and practices of the nations they are sent to, knowing their customs, language and taboos. In the same breath Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 that we are made new creatures in Christ, we are also charged to becoming His ambassadors bearing what he calls "*the ministry of reconciliation.*" What is this reconciliation? Verse 19 explains: "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself .. and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.*" We who are reconciled to God through Christ are all responsible for answering that call to be ambassadors of Christ, as believers who will walk wisely and circumspectly throughout the world to communicate the Gospel in terms that their audiences will understand.

As I shared in our first article on this, cult groups are actual groups of people who have created their own alternative realities, literal cultures, within the larger ones they live in. To reach them, we must first understand them and where they come from, cultists are some of the most self-righteous and yet spiritually impoverished people you will ever meet, beaten down with their traditions in an alternate world of cultural difference. And the Cultworld where they live needs ambassadors from the realm of heaven who will meet them where they are to bear witness to the living reality of the Abundant Life in Jesus Christ they need to hear of.

There used to be a song on Christian radio back in 1983 when I first entered the ministry called "A Colony Of Heaven", and it made a beautiful point: the world is looking for a place of refuge from its own madness and people to lead them there to it. The song spelled out how we are supposed to be the members of that colony, which we all know is the Kingdom within, the Kingdom of God found in the Body of Christ worldwide. And ambassadors are to be the best representatives of their own culture, bridging the gap between their world and the culture they are appointed to interact with. So when the cultists start appearing in your life, realize that you've been given an opportunity to share in a precious ministry of reconciliation! Don't let pride, fear or indifference fill you, rather prepare yourself to glorify your Father before them and become a loving yet bold witness for His Son by the power of the indwelling Spirit who lives within you!

Why Christian Fail To Witness Effectively To The Cults

Why cults exist has already been discussed, but we've not yet touched on why Christians have such a hard time witnessing to them. The previous paper on cults I've written is aimed to help sensitize you to the very real cultural, social and psychological divides that exist between cult members and the world outside their borders. This was done to provide you a greater grip upon the challenges involved. But before we begin discussing how to effectively provide Christian witness to cult members, it would helpful to consider the history of abortive Christian efforts that failed to provide this to them.

The Church has failed to witness effectively to cult members because of one major problem, that being the misguided thinking and behavior that adversely colors our consideration of outreach to them. When it comes to the mindset of the Church in regard to reaching out to cult members, there are longstanding assumptions that present themselves among Christians

when the subject comes up that show why the Church fails to do so. In my 24 years of ministry in this field, I have encountered a score of these that highlight why and how Christians fail to reach cultists within their sphere of spiritual influence. Many a fascinating story could be told that profoundly illuminates a side of Christian thinking that is troubling, yet that is not our goal here. It is enough that we squarely admit that these issues do exist and significantly cloud if not obscure true Christian witness to them. We simply have to identify and deal with them so we may further the Great Commission in the forgotten harvest fields of the Cultworld.

There are three basic failings in our collective Christian reaction that consistently stand out quite regularly amid all that I've encountered. Perhaps the greatest reason why Christians fail to witness to cultists is **ignorance**, a very real lack of knowledge, wisdom or experience regarding the ins and outs of witnessing to them. The Church seems largely unaware that there are ways to witness to cultists that provide authentically transformational outreach. In this day of readily available information, such lack of understanding is absolutely inexplicable – some believers even view cults as just other Christian denominations! A second reason involves the **prejudice** Christians harbor within them concerning cultists. This sounds ugly, but it's a plain truth. Many believers hold such prejudices against them, preconceived *bad* ideas about them, which are often based on fear, half-truths, and even slander. These biases are then used to justify the offensive and even obnoxious behavior and attitudes Christians often exhibit toward cultists who cross their path. But perhaps the worst reason of all is the towering **apathy** of many Christians who simply just don't care about the challenges of the Cultworld. For any one of a hundred reasons, there is complete lack of any real concern by them for the cult problem today, choosing to live their own lives free of any care about it.

There are no easy answers to these challenges, but it isn't hard to understand that God's love is what commands us to preach the gospel to all men – which include all cult members also. That's why any believer should give himself over to the necessary labor it will take to learn how to share the Gospel with them. I have found that most Christians actually believe this to be something they desire to do, but usually struggle with the issue of ignorance the most. They very often really want to reach them for the Lord Jesus but just don't know how to do so. There is no better time than the present for these same believers to acquire some of the knowledge that has been gathered by countercult ministry leaders for decades. That is why the ministries that make up the EMNR coalition are invaluable aids to the Christian Church today that stand ready to assist. But the challenge of prejudice is much tougher and apathy, tougher still.

Changing prejudicial attitudes and long-standing suspicions takes time and concerted effort, but again, part of it comes from learning about how and why cults function in our world, with a respectful understanding of their culture and their own values. In so doing, the myths and misinformation can be carefully deconstructed and verified or refuted. Fact and fantasy must be intentionally separated from one another. And those who live in apathetic unconcern over cults simply have to be dealt with by God's Spirit Himself. You cannot make someone care for someone else. And if the undeniable clarity of God's Word and Spirit given to us concerning loving eternal souls won't change a professing believer's mind, no one will. Until the earth shaking occurs, it won't happen. Usually, the conversion of one of their loved ones to the Mormons is a great way He gets their attention – when it's almost too late.

Spiritual Meditations On Cult Evangelism

In sharp contrast to these sadly misguided attitudes of too many believers, the Bible gives some key guidelines to follow in reaching out to the members of the Cultworlds we will encounter. Two verses of Scripture that I would strongly recommend those committing to cult witness to first prayerfully consider would be **2 Timothy 2:23-26** and **1 Peter 3:15**. *These should become personal spiritual meditations in all your preparation and study.* From these verses, we are charged to recognize that there are many religious people who do exist all around us who pervert the faith and who should be reached with truth by Christians. We learn that we are to avoid needless provocation and debate but be able to gently and patiently *educate* and *testify* to those who are deceived, so that they are able to free themselves from

the snares of Satan. We should be prepared to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you in meekness and fear." Spirit-inspired humility will always be accompanied by Spirit-inspired love and boldness to declare what is true and what is false. Only the help offered by Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit with a love for the soul of the cultist and seen through their loving, patient example as they make a stand for truth will do the job. These verses should be dwelt upon prayerfully and often. These Scriptures, as well as **Jude 3**, are the Biblical charges for outreach to cults.

In this same vein, the words of the ancient bishop Irenaeus, speaking almost two millennia ago about the heretical sects of his day are just as relevant today in regard to our efforts to share the true Gospel with cultists: they are not Scriptural canon, but they are some of the most compelling and earnest calls for the Body of Christ to reach the deceived with His Truth:

We do indeed pray that these men may not remain in the pit which they themselves have dug, but .. that they relinquish the shadow; and that they, being converted to the Church of God, may be lawfully begotten. .. We pray for these things on their behalf, loving them better than they seem to love themselves. .. Wherefore it shall not weary us, to endeavor with all our might to stretch out the hand unto them .. to reclaim the wanderers and convert them to the Church of God, (and) to confirm at the same time the minds of the neophytes (new Christians), that they may preserve steadfast the faith which they have received, guarded by the Church in its integrity .. (Against Heresies, ANF, v. 3, p. 460, 526).

Truly, if there has been ever a need for us to hearken to such a heartfelt cry for the Church to be what it should be as God's instrument for truth in the world, now indeed is the time. Souls are at stake and the host of heaven watches us. Let's prepare to speak the truth in love.

Preparing For Cult Evangelism

First of all, let us consider the necessary steps of preparation. After we personally prepare ourselves for witnessing to a cultist both spiritually and intellectually, we will examine some general guidelines for how to witness to them and then enter into a discussion of specific principles on how to engage a cultist in dialogue that will give you the best chance of scaling the cultural divide between you and them. The remainder of this paper will outline cult evangelistic principles without focusing on the specific doctrines and practices of a particular group to any degree – that is homework you must pursue, and we'll discuss that shortly.

First of all, we pray. Prayer is the alpha and omega of any ministry. It is the seeking of the face of God that we might see the touch of His Spirit on our lives. Without prayer and reliance upon the Lord for the strength He must give us to be His witnesses, we are beating the air and trusting in the arm of flesh. So prayer for our outreach to cultists as led by the Spirit (Romans 8:26-27) is an absolute must, and we have found that there are three specific areas of prayer focus we should bring before the Lord:

1. *Prayer for protective covering* (Luke 10:19). Prayer covering is understandably essential. The covering that connection with mature Christians who actively assist you in preparation for this is vital to ensuring that you are both socially and spiritually prepared for the dialogues and conflicts to come. You will face the buffetings of both fallen human and – in rare cases – demonic spiritual influences in your dialogues. *But don't let this focus dominate your prayers.* The dimension of the demonic is usually overblown in popular church discussions of how cults operate. We've seen already that it is the cult's social influence working through the cultist that blinds and controls them: the main source of spiritual opposition will not be demonic, but rather from the fallen human spirit of the cultist who walks in a mental bondage that is quite deep. On very rare occasions, demonic oppression can accompany some cult members, and you may well discern it. In your prayers of preparation, assert your authority and bind demonic oppression which may attempt to hinder and deceive you, but don't make a big deal over it. Give no place for the devil and stay focused on your preparation. Too many Christians get morbidly imbalanced over demons and accuse cult members of being possessed and other foolish charges. Don't get on that slippery slope – **deal with demons only when they are really there!**

2. *Pray for fullness of spiritual fruit* (Galatians 5:22-23). The interaction and challenge of reaching out to a thoroughly indoctrinated and deceptively convinced individual will require a supremely Spirit-supplied ability to respond in a Godly manner. As you work with cultists, you will find that conversations often can become very tense, even argumentative. We must not play the kind of game that the cultist can pull you into, that of exchanging insult for insult or quickly taking personal offense to some of the outrageous things they will confront you with. Bear in mind that one of the main tasks you will have at hand is dealing with the fallen, yet religious spirit of the cultist! Pray for the power of the Spirit of God to bring forth His spiritual fruit in our lives, namely that of divine love (godly compassion/compulsion: Ro. 5:5, Eph. 4:15), divine patience, and divine gentleness.
3. *Pray for wisdom* (James 1:5). Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied, and you will definitely need to acquire all the knowledge you can about cults and about the particular one whose member knocks at your door. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help you properly apply, at the right time, the knowledge you receive as you do your homework. It is through the approach of respectful dialogue that you will be seeking to engage the cultist at your door, over several sessions, if possible. Ask the Spirit of God to show you when to speak, what to speak and when to remain silent. Dialogues that the Lord uses to convict the cultist require that we be very aware of this!

As Ezekiel was called upon by Yahweh to stand in the gap for Israel, so *the Christian who encounters the cultist is being presented with the opportunity to be the intercessor for them. Pray earnestly for God's Spirit to mercifully visit the heart and mind of the cultist to lead them out of their darkness, convict them of the Truth and their own sin and lead them to repentance and faith in Christ* (2 Cor, 4:3-4, Jn. 16:7-13, Rom. 2:4).

Secondly, we study. Through focused study, we give the Holy Ghost something to work with. Commit yourself to a serious acquisition of quality teaching and knowledge about the cult group you seek to do outreach to. Remember the quote of Irenaeus in our previous article on this point: *"it is impossible for any one to heal the sick, if he has no knowledge of the disease of the patients."* There's an old saying that knowledge is power, and believe me, when you find yourself in the middle of conversation with a Jehovah's Witness Pioneer about their doctrine of the new heavens and new earth, you will appreciate the shining wisdom of that proverb like never before. *A working knowledge of the false doctrine being presented as truth by cultism is fundamental to countering it with the Truth of Scripture.*

And balanced, objective truth and research is what we must very intentionally seek out. There's a lot of irresponsible and sensational teaching concerning cults in Christian circles that does nothing but muddy the waters with more confusion, prejudice and ignorance about cults, and that is very obviously the last thing we need to be doing. Let's take a look at a good course of study in preparation for witnessing to cults:

1. First, *make certain you have a good knowledge of what you believe.* It is useless to try to defend a faith you know nothing about, and you stand a good chance of being adversely affected by your time with cult members if you haven't a clue about what is true or false. *Study your Bible - know what the Faith is!* It's not a mystery and we live in a time of tremendous opportunity and light. We can know what we believe! We have **no excuse** under the sun to not know what the Bible teaches about the Trinity, about the resurrection, about the doctrine of the soul, and so on. And you don't have to become a Bible scholar, either! Learning the essentials of the Christian faith can only have one effect and that's to deepen, edify and strengthen you like nothing else, rooting and grounding yourself in the holy Faith. Take some time before you ever begin witnessing to cultists to know what you believe - but not several months!
2. Then *do all you can to gain a good knowledge of what the cultist believes.* Spending time with the cultist at your door or on the job or at the family gathering to learn what he believes is vital - you've got to question them personally and get to know where they stand on their doctrine as well as their lifestyle. However, the process can be and must be

greatly facilitated by the homework you've done on Cult X or Cult Y *before* they ever knock at your door – or date your niece! **I cannot underemphasize the critical need to study what cults teach before you witness to them.** A working knowledge of their cult doctrine and practice is vital to our preparation. Learn what the major doctrines of the cult groups are, particularly their doctrine of salvation. This is vital, because after all, that's the bottom line of faith, one's eternal redemption. When all else is said and done, we need to be talking to the cultist about their eternal destiny, and we need to know where they stand upon this most crucial of all matters. Be ready to discuss that with them!

A critical part of this knowledge is to learn what the terminology differences are between cultic and Christian doctrine. A cultist might use the word "grace" easily about their faith, but may actually mean something entirely different. When you speak of Jesus Christ, their view of Christ may actually deny His divinity as God the Son. If they tell you they live by "faith," they are referring to doing works that earns their salvation! *This is a major source of confusion Christians are often unaware of,* so get to know the language of redefined terminology they use. Don't become a passive listener taking at face value what they say is "the truth." It is hard to defend the faith against an enemy of the faith who we are to lovingly share with who sounds as if they believe as we do. Cultists confuse and mislead more of their prospects on this point alone. Be very discerning.

Half of the battle to be an effective witness to cultists is already won when the discerning Christian, willing to be a good witness for his Lord, has prepared himself for ministry to them. We live now in a time in which the knowledge we are speaking of is now readily available. Twenty years ago, countercult resources were few and far between. Forty years ago, when the Church of God's beloved witnessing mentor Dr. Charles Beach first began to address the cult problem, they virtually did not exist, except for a few scattered books by men like Dr. Walter Martin and Gordon Lewis. Today, thank God, it is a different story. Many outstanding books, journals, videos, study guides, cult awareness organizations, Christian ministries and Internet websites now exist to provide the latest news, critical assessments and information about cult groups currently active around the world. Take the time to find and invest in these tools. Without them, the going will be needlessly more fraught with difficulty than it needs to be. Seek them out, spend the money, and study them well for this is an investment for the sake of souls. A good list of them may be found on our website at www.spiritwatch.org, as well as in the websites of the member ministries of the Evangelical Ministries to New Religions coalition that our ministry is a part of. A link to EMNR is on our home page at www.emnr.org.

3. *Get a working knowledge of cultic mind control devices* that shackle the minds of the cultists you speak to. As we have said, cult mind control terribly cripples the cultist's ability to think independently of the cult's powerful indoctrination, and will hinder your ability to communicate with them. Taking this invisible bull by the horns is vital, for one of your goals in cult witnessing should be to help the cult member start to think for themselves again, and not to simply react to what you say with the pre-programmed responses the cult has indoctrinated them with.

Cult mind control is a very big part of that problem we must deal with. Learn how the cult member is trained to think, and therefore act, and you can anticipate how to lead your conversations with them. Understanding each of Lifton's eight marks of mind control we've discussed is an essential part of this self-education. There are many books now available that you can find which will help you understand this better than we can discuss here now. Using such profoundly insightful books can make the difference between an argument between human spirits and a visitation of God's Spirit. A list of them is in our resource guide we enclosed with the first paper.

Again, I acknowledge that this is a controversial issue, but one that we feel cannot be overlooked at pain of losing golden opportunities to reach cult members. Do not ignore this issue! A dear friend of ours who was raised a Jehovah's Witness and who came to Christ wrote about this smothering mental bondage in a poem about her life in the Watchtower. It painfully

shows how seriously we must take the abusive mental trauma and conditioning that cult mind control has imposed on the cult members we must reach out to:

*They taught me I was worthless unless I preached their word
They said without their guidance my prayers would never be heard
Through years of disappointment I lived from day to day
Always sad and repentant, my loneliness never going away
My prayer was truly answered although it took some time
But before Jesus could take my heart He had first to clear my mind*

Principles For Cult Evangelism

Once having prepared ourselves, we must adopt several basic principles for witnessing to cultists calling in our lives that will counter their deception and open them for the Gospel. Before we go on, let's review where we've been: if you are determined to reach a cultist for Christ, you will have come to understand the workings of their Cultworld, have sought the face of God through prayer for the anointing of His Spirit upon your life that will help you break its' yoke, have grounded yourself in the Faith, have gathered the necessary tools for the forgotten cult harvest and have learned how to use them. **Now**, we can consider how to witness to the cultist.

Before we begin, we must stress again a very important qualification: I have intentionally not examined cultic doctrinal or terminology differences here to any degree due to time constraints. Had I done so, this paper easily would become a book. As I have said, avail yourself of the many excellent resources at hand to prepare yourself. You can, of course, go into a witnessing situation without any knowledge of cultic doctrine and still be an effective witness for the truth by an especially careful course of questioning and listening, as well as definition of those all important terminology differences, but I would strongly advise you to not try it without at least some study of the subject – that is for your spiritual preparation and protection as well as to ensure the witnessing encounter makes a real difference.

First and foremost, ***cultists are won to Jesus only through the sharing of the Gospel by Christians who've done their homework on cults.*** The Bible makes it clear that the Gospel alone has the power to transform fallen men into saints. We know this to be true. However, what we are often not aware of, I have been contending, is that the average cult member is preaching a gospel of works, has been conditioned to contend for this gospel with argumentation, and typically will not receive a traditional Gospel hearing with understanding because of the spiritual and mental bondage they are in. So we must be ready to walk them through a careful process of inquiry, dialogue, and questioning which will help free their minds enough to where they understand what you are saying to them. That is why we must be ready and prepared to be communicators of the Gospel. We are to be His ambassadors who know how and when to explain the nature of our Faith to cultists, or deal with the claims of the counterfeit religion they are clinging to which opposes the truth of the Gospel.

Secondly, ***witnessing to cultists must be intentionally interactive: listening and questioning is crucial*** (James 1:19). It is a process and not just simply an event. Let us thoroughly understand that. Witnessing to cultists must be a focused encounter where the Christian witness must pay close attention to what the cultist both says and doesn't say. This is an interaction that draws upon the perspectives that knowledge of the cultist's group brings as well as an appreciation of his own personal expression of it. Cultists may be influenced by subtle forms of cult mind control, yet they are not brainless robots: they are individuals whose views should be listened to, reflected back and yet respectfully called to question. Their own questions and challenges should be answered and responded to by the believer who wants to be seen as a credible person who listens to them.

Thirdly, ***all effective cult witnessing encounters involve three things, prayer without ceasing, respectful dialogue, and sincere efforts to build relationships.*** No matter the setting of the encounter with a cultist, whether on the job or on the streets, these three

objectives will help foster an effective interpersonal bridge to the heart and mind of the cultist. We begin with our "praying always" in the Spirit while we listen to the cultist sharing his viewpoint on the subject you're discussing all the while doing our best to convey our desire to stay in contact with them out of a genuine desire to get to know them. This attempt to building friendly relationships with a cult member is a big step to reaching them for Christ, for your sincere interest in them personally as you unconditionally accept them as they are could bring you a hearing in return. Bearing in mind the issues that we've seen that cultists labor under, and we will see that to be realistic, we should acknowledge that it is going to take time to work through these issues in our discussions, even for a prepared Christian worker. We must respect that process by making room for it. So where possible, plan to spend all the time you possibly can with the cultist, praying for them and yourself as you share and testify, and doing all you can to maintain contact with them – even socially mixing with them "outside" the witnessing encounter itself to let them see your light shine before them.

Fourthly, there are **ten principles of interpersonal contact to bear in mind** as you witness to cult members. We have learned through persistent and trying experience that these principles will go a long way toward establishing a fruitful witness that God's Spirit will use to draw the cultist out of the spiritual and social bondage to the group he or she is in. No matter where or when you speak with someone under the influence of cultism, these interpersonal principles will give you great insight into what to expect when working a long forgotten and even forsaken harvest so that God will give the increase in the end:

- **Control the conversation** – Cultists consider themselves to be the guardians of truth whom you should just passively listen and accept. You don't want the cultist to pull you down their rabbit trail tangents or their "sales pitch." Keep the initiative and focus on what you want to discuss and balance the need to listen to them as well.
- **Ask thought provoking questions** – Asking open ended, leading questions that will entice independent thinking in the cultist during your discussions and hearing of the cultist's reiteration of his group's viewpoint is vital. Encourage the cultist to consider examination of his worldview by fielding questions "outside the box" of his belief.
- **Be patient, yet persistent** – Rely upon and trust the Spirit of God for divine patience as you are stretched and even tried, in your discussions with cultists. These are easily among the most challenging witnessing encounters any Christian can enter into, yet do not give up. Slow the conversation down and take time to think it through.
- **Dialogue deliberately** – Listen to the cultist's question, consider where his line of reasoning will be going as you answer it, then answer or ask the right questions in response. This must be an intentional effort to bridge the spiritual and social divides that exist between you and them through consistently chosen words and thoughts.
- **Be flexible** – Cultists recognize when they are outside the familiar territory of their conversational control and will try to get it back. Be prepared to try different approaches when necessary as you dialogue, and be ready to "roll with the punches" as conversational focus shifts occur. This happens in any good conversation.
- **Be honest** – If you come to a point of discussion where you don't have an answer to a challenging question, say so. Use this moment to take the initiative with the cultist by offering to follow-up with them on the question at a later time: offer to meet with them again later and come back *prepared* with an answer!
- **Never argue or take offense** – Don't be tempted to return evil for the evil the cultist may hurl your way when disagreement comes. If things become adversarial, it may be unavoidable, but remain positive and friendly and ride out the storm of cultist wiles – or his/her frustration with you for not "getting" what they want you to believe.
- **Do not "gang up" on the cultist** – Finding strength in numbers when doing something new is understandable and cult witnessing is especially tempting. But confine your "help" to no more than one other person and during dialogue, no more than one of you should speak at a time, *the other should listen and pray!*
- **Be humble** – Don't let your knowledge about the cult's errors or your assurance of salvation and truth puff you up with pride. Without Jesus, we'd be no better off than they are. Let that sobering thought provide perspective to you and maintain a modest, self-effacing disposition. An eternal soul is at stake - not just an argument.

- **Let love reign** – Let the cultist see Godly love (Romans 5:5) for them in your patience, kindness and gentleness that you extend to them as you interact with them. It's a rare thing they don't see from too many other supposedly Spirit-filled Christians: they will remember your powerful non-verbal example long after they have left.

A fifth cult evangelism principle is vital to bear in mind: ***there is no one "sure target" technique that delivers cultists.*** I don't care who they are, let no one tell you otherwise. There is no one secret method that you can use that will bring the cultist at your door around to accepting and believing the Gospel and renounce the cultic deception they've lived under for possibly all their life. I wish there was such a thing because we'd be using it, but it doesn't exist. Rather, we have found that *the usage of a combination of one or more different approaches is going to, in the long run, be much more effective in reaching the cultist for Christ.* This is because *cultists are individuals and will respond differently to various approaches* we take to reach them. One approach won't even faze Moonie X while the same one will shake Mormon Y with conviction, and vice-versa. We must wait upon the Lord to show us which one of these to use. I believe we serve a God more than able and willing to tell us by His Spirit's prompting *what* to speak and *when* to speak as we do His work, and indeed, waiting on the Lord for His direction is how true Christian ministry is accomplished.

So part of our study must be that of the several basic approaches to cult witnessing that countercult evangelists have developed over the years: they are carefully introduced to the cult member as you dialogue with them through a question and answer approach, and these are powerful approaches that do much to punch through the bondage of cultic mind control conditioning and do end runs around the cultic argumentation they love to use. Before you can sow the seeds of the Gospel into the heart and mind of the cultist, you've simply got to break the hard, fallow ground there, unearth the rocks, pull the weeds, and sweeten the soil if need be and these approaches will go a long way towards doing just this:

1. **Biblical Approach** – This is the one we are most familiar with since doctrinal controversy is usually the point of contention raised between Christians and cultists. This technique is a straightforward comparison of the cult's doctrinal positions with orthodox Christian ones found in Scripture. The usage of cult publications and Bible research materials (such as Hebrew/Greek lexicons and Bible reference works) are used in this approach. Be aware, however, that Biblical approaches can easily be turned into "Bible ping-pong" or "Scripture sword-fights" and may often be ineffective until the other approaches have been used, depending upon the person you speak with and the direction they are taking in their contact with you.
2. **Testimonial Approach** – A testimonial approach is simple and to the point: it is where you share with the cultist your heartfelt testimony as to your own walk with God and your intimate knowledge of Him by a relationship with His Son as your personal Savior. This is a wonderful and personal way to share with a cultist the assurance, joy and fulfillment that being a child of God brings, something the cultist does not enjoy, no matter their outer poise. However, personal experiences outside the cultic sphere of influence are not viewed as valid since the "truth" is only found in their sphere of things; under these circumstances even a good testimony can be of limited use.

These two approaches have been the ones most Christians have instinctively relied upon. They are good approaches, and God has certainly used them. However, there are other good ones being employed today by experienced Christian countercult workers use to good effect in conjunction with these two; these will require serious study to understand and apply, but they are well worth the effort and EMNR member ministries are more than ready to assist:

3. **Historical Approach** – This is a careful and selective review of the cult group's past that documents their inconsistency, hypocrisy and bankrupt claims to spiritual authority. It reviews false prophecies, doctrinal flip-flops or policy changes that are then contrasted with the current cult position regarding each subject. This is done by

the use of photocopies or actual cult publications containing the accounts of history the group has done its best to sanitize and hide from the cultist.

4. **Counter Mind-Control Approach** – This is a line of careful questioning aimed at "jump starting" independent thought in the cultist. It usually revolves around a generic conversation about cults and mind control itself or a line of inquiry that helps the cultist see how controlled they are. Often, a frank discussion on the several components of mind control in a cult group *without any mention of the cultists' own group* will help them "connect the dots" for themselves to good effect.
5. **Scholarship Approach** – This approach is an aggressive one that is aimed at exposing the dishonesty of the cult's selective and highly sanitized quoting of non-cult sources that are used in "support" of their positions. It seeks out the actual scholarly sources the cults point to and critically examines their legitimacy, accuracy and bias. Frequently, cults rely upon agnostic, liberal and even secular scholarship that is actually hostile to any Christian belief system for their support. Even when they don't a showing them of how their cult takes even reputable quotes of scholars, newscasts, etc. out of context will convincingly undermine their arguments.
6. **Homework Approach** – What happens in the "homework" approach is when you gently but firmly confront a cultist with a series of questions that they seem stumped upon or cannot answer, and you request that they get back with you on the answer to their question. The strength of this approach rests upon your ability to gently compel the cultist to consider the question after they have left you and make a concerted effort to find an answer for it. It can be used with any line of questioning you may use regarding scholarship, mind-control, doctrinal or historical issues. You are essentially getting them to commit to answering your question, and such a search can be most impacting personally to the cultist, providing revelation that will prove enlightening.
7. **Eclectic Approach** – This is a Spirit-led deployment of one or more of the above strategies in one or several meetings with the cultist. More than one of them can be used at once depending on the content involved. It is possible to use this approach in one meeting, but it is far better to switch between them across a period of time.

Why are we going in these directions of study and preparation? *We are learning how to deal with the objections, cult conditioning and twisted mindset that cultists are trained to immediately interject once you begin to dialogue with them in matters that directly confront their false teachings.* Remember, they are there to convert you. Their operative assumption is that you are the one are in spiritual darkness. Their cult group has the only way to God, and you are to submit to it to have any hope of deliverance from Satanic ignorance. This is the false cult authority issue that has to be dealt with. You have to chip at, hack down or outright demolish the cultist's blind faith in the legitimacy of their cult authority. These strategies will accomplish this diplomatically in one way or another. Lead a cultist to question their authority and you will be leading them outside the cult box towards thinking for themselves again.

This will become at some point, no matter how softly spoken, a confrontational issue any way you view it, and their objections are the very obstacles that you will come up against as you prepare to share the Gospel with a cultist. It must be done, however, and you must steel yourself as a good soldier of Jesus and endure this hardness. It's the unglamorous hard work that gets the job done. Unless the Spirit of God has opened the cult member's mind and heart up to you and there is clear evidence that they are listening and understanding you, you will find it very difficult to share the Gospel to a cultist ready to gently or energetically argue with you any other way. That is why incorporating these strategies is so fundamentally important in equipping you to witness to cult members.

Sharing The Gospel With A Cultist

How do you actually share the Gospel with a cultist? You share it the same way as you would with any other lost person. However, *for cultists, there must be an intentional stress made upon the role of God's undeserved grace and mercy as the basis for salvation.* Remember that

cultists have been indoctrinated with a mindset that emphasizes not faith, but religious works as the true basis for earning God's grace, contradicting what Ephesians 2:8-9 says to the contrary. You must proclaim very clearly that faith in Jesus *alone* saves, not association with "the Restored Church" or attention to the dictates of "God's Visible Organization." When the opportunities arise, as they surely will, for you to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a cultist, make sure that you remember to emphasize three major Gospel truths with them, truths that cultists especially need to hear loud and clear from the Christian Church:

- 1) **Jesus Christ loves them** – Keep lifting up the great love and compassion Jesus Christ has for them. Don't just say it: give them the reasons why it's true! Press home the fact that Jesus loves them, personally, and that He calls all to intimacy and relationship with God through Him. Matthew 11:28-30, 1 Peter 5:7 and John 14:6 are good verses that emphasize the unconditional love of God in Christ, something that cultists desperately need to know – *that they don't have to deserve it!*
- 2) **Salvation is a free gift received by faith alone in Christ – not works!** – Continually emphasize that they can enjoy eternal salvation *now*, and that no amount of religious vocation, study, or practice through their group can bestow it upon them. Let them hear the good news that the saving grace of God *is immediately available to all* who exercise nothing but faith in Jesus. Romans 10:9-13, Ephesians 2:8-9, and John 1:12-13 wonderfully make this clear, showing that Biblical salvation comes only through faith in Christ!
- 3) **God's Word is the final authority in all matters of faith** – Make sure that the cultist recognizes the Biblical testimony concerning the authority of Scripture. Help them recognize that the Word of God alone contains His truth which all can learn and receive spiritual light and life from, not from the twisted contradictions of cult authority. Show them Biblical passages like 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12 and Acts 17:11 that establish this crucial point – Bible truth is a settled standard.

Certainly, you will need to emphasize the need for confession, repentance and faith in Christ, but the central truths found in these three themes must be driven home very pointedly. **Remember to define your terms:** ensure that they understand what you mean when you speak of faith, grace, and salvation. Cultists must be introduced to the authority of God's Word and what it teaches about the love of God and the salvation Christ offers by faith in His saving sacrifice on the Cross. Share these and other Scriptures that present these truths. In so doing, you are sharing the Gospel to the cultist and fulfilling Christ's command. We are called to be witnesses to Jesus as His ambassadors and to let Him give the increase (1 Cor. 3:7). Let God's Spirit do the rest and trust Him to accomplish His purposes through you: *He will!*

The Witnessing Encounter

As we've seen, cult members are found everywhere under the sun in the people we meet everyday in every walk of life. They are our co-workers and neighbors, they hail us on the streets and go to school with us. But the encounters that most Christians have with cult members usually comes in the well known and often dreaded occasions when they come calling at their homes. In these instances, cultists come in pairs and that makes it doubly difficult to win them as individuals. You could ask for only one of them to come back another time, at which time you can share more effectively.

If you can get a cultist alone, that allows them to be more "themselves" and to share more freely. However, this may not happen, so you must be ready to design your dialogue with them in the context of speaking to both. Focus your remarks upon the cult member who appears to be leading the visit (this will become apparent), and request that only he be allowed to speak, or at least that they take turns doing so. In this way, you are leveling the playing field and making the process more accessible for you – and them. Have a fellow worker who also has studied and prepared with you for prayer and dialogue support when you witness.

Frankly, you probably won't win them the first day, but that is not to say it doesn't happen. When it does happen, it is because the Gospel was presented to a cultist whom God already had been dealing with. *Pray for such divine appointments – they can happen.* Still, they are usually very much the exception, and not the rule. The reality is that God is waiting to use us to work the cult fields as patiently and persistently as He works with us. The Great Commission of Jesus is that we be faithful witnesses to Him and His Gospel. God will bless those who are determined to walk that out among *whoever*, and that, as we have said, includes the cultist at your door, in your PTO group, at the bus stop or airport terminal.

Know the limits of your knowledge and stay within them. Don't overextend yourself in your discussions by covering too much ground to provide a thorough discussion. It is usually – though not always – best to settle on one subject and discuss it well. For example initiating a dialogue about the Trinity is a big subject to tackle in one setting and is at the heart of the Christian Faith. You will definitely want to speak with certainty based upon personal preparation and study when you speak of this subject, based upon what you know the cult itself believes and teaches about it. If you're not aware of what they say and teach about it, avoid any discussion on it unless you are ready to be caught unprepared and be able to follow up with the cultist, assuming they return at all (and many times, they won't). Jumping from subject to subject in a discussion with a cultist can rapidly break down real communication, risks confusion of important issues and gives no time for the cultist to consider the truth you've presented.

On a purely pragmatic level, the cultist is thinking you are a potential convert. A prepared Christian worker will know this and be ready to turn the tables on them, precept upon precept, brick by brick. We pray as we share, as we listen, as we disagree. Jesus told us to pray and not faint, to pray "without ceasing" in Luke 18:1. We must be no less earnest in directly engaging hearts and minds when it comes to soul winning cultists. A great apostolic example of this was Paul in his missionary journeys when he engaged Greek philosophers as well as Gentile converts to Judaism (Acts 17:16-33, 19:8-10). We should listen as much as we speak. Dialogue is a two-way form of communication between two people, and through it, we establish ourselves to the cultist as someone who respects them, takes them seriously and is willing to consider their viewpoint. Isn't that we want when we talk to some one, especially if we already know we have differences over a given issue?

And as we've already stressed, over and over, do your best to build a respectful and friendly relationship with the cultist. This is going to be hard to do, since cult members are not encouraged to make friends or even acquaintances outside of their groups, but it can be done and has been done to great effect by persistent Christians who work with cults. The relationship you build with the cult member will be the bridge over which they will cross over from the Cultworld to beholding the Gospel and Christ. Your life and example of patient, loving respect will reveal the Gospel as literal living epistles. *You could be the very first Bible verses they may ever see come to life.* If you can foster a relationship with them, it will go a long way to helping get them out of the cults and into the arms of Jesus.

Personal Strategies For Cult Witnessing Outreaches

After preparing yourself and getting a good grasp of cult evangelism principles, and after you actually engage in personal evangelistic effort to cultists, you may find a growing burden within you to continue on in this ministry (I sincerely pray everyone reading these does). If you so feel led, you can then start to plan effective strategies that will impact cult members at our doors and beyond them in a real effort to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). Here are some guidelines on how to follow through on this.

Plan According To Time - Determine if the encounter times with a cult member you hope to reach will be limited to one-time, short-term or long-term encounters. To reach them, time must be spent with them and only if they are willing to pursue the questions and discussion you're engaging them with. If you can get a cultist to meet with you in a series of several encounters over extended time, you will be able to challenge their convictions, deal with their issues and share Christ and the Gospel to a far more impacting effect. We think that in most

cases you will find that short-term or one-time encounters will possibly be the best you can expect on the average. On occasion, however, there may come that sovereign encounter in which God places a cult member into your life who you can keep contact with so as to keep sharing and living out the Gospel of Jesus before them.

Foreknowledge about how long you can personally keep up a dialogue with a cultist is very important as well. It will enable you to determine the content and pace of your dialogue, and how to best conduct the dialogue with the cultist. For example, if you know the Jehovah's Witness you are talking to will not likely be coming back again, you may want to take a much more direct approach with them that deals with their cult conditioning, shows them to what extent the Watchtower's authority is bankrupt, and conclude with a contextualized presentation of the Gospel to them in a way they will understand. However, if you can determine that the Mormon missionaries are going to be coming back to your house several times you will be able to concentrate on one or more of the seven witnessing approaches with them as well as focusing on two or three subjects to discuss. At any rate, one vital truth to keep in mind is that we *proceed no faster with the cultist as is necessary*, ensuring they are understanding fully the implications of the dialogue we are sharing with them. Focus upon one subject at a time and deal with it thoroughly instead of haphazardly and aimlessly hitting on several. Less truly is more in this case.

Plan According To Witness Setting – Will you be working to reach the cultist at work? In public? On the street? At home? In response to a media promotion? At school events? Those are equally important questions, since these factors will also affect, in one way or another, how a cultist will respond to your dialogue. In more private settings, where one cult member is approached, they will have more of a tendency to be open to considering the things you are sharing with them. In more public ones, especially those where other cult members are, they will be certainly going to be much more resistant to your discussion, usually for the sake of saving face and being seen as apostate. Remember, cultists fear being seen by other members as seeming disloyal to their group at pains of harsh discipline and even expulsion from it. The social ostracization they will receive from friends and even family in the group is often too great to bear. We want to reach the cultist, but not to unduly jeopardize them or the rapport we are seeking to establish with them. So be careful and pace yourself in your sharing, and seek to adapt your dialogue to the setting we find yourself in.

Plan According To Church Burden – Every church should be taking the Bible command to contend for the faith more to heart. That's a given. And a corporate response to cults is the truly Biblical one. Ephesians 6:10 contains the opening verse to the classic exhortation by Paul for the "brethren" to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." The verse makes it clear he speaks to the whole church, not just those appointed as the "spiritual warriors" in our churches. We are *all* called to apply ourselves to that wrestling with the wiles of Satan. So our planning to reach cultists is going to depend upon how many of us take that command seriously. The more people you can enlist in prayer support and outreach activity, the more you can do to set up a systematic response to cultic activity in a community.

If several Christians in a church were to catch a burden for countering cults in their community, the opportunities abound for expanded outreach. If several churches were able to field a ministry outreach team each, cult activity in a given area could be effectively countered within a few months and the Gospel advanced mightily. That's because you will be switching from a reactive stance of ministry to a proactive one. You will be taking the initiative and running with it by taking the fight out to the cults instead of waiting for them to do their deceptive work. Visitation in neighborhoods where cultists have went calling, community awareness seminars and other creative outreaches can be done that keep the light of truth shining upon the work of cults in your localities and educating the church and public at large about their deceptive and abusive nature.

It takes Christians of courage, vision and passion for truth to take such a stand in our society where religious pluralism is now the norm and the concept of absolute truth in opposition to error is viewed as intolerance and even a hate crime. These are, after all, the last days. But Western civilization still watches and waits for the Church to take a stand on what is right and

wrong, and cultism truly is one of the most tragic twisting of human aspiration and faith that can be seen. It should be not only called out for what it is but also lovingly, yet firmly contrasted with the Christian Gospel truth. For those who would dare in the Spirit to make a stand for the Lord Jesus and His Kingdom in this backsliding day, the skies above the horizons of the Cultworld are the limit. The truth must be spoken and shared in love. To paraphrase George Carey, pioneer missionary: *"Attempt great things for God and expect great things from Him."*

Some Final Observations

I have delivered to you some basic instructions in cult witnessing that I have learned over the years by the best workers in this all too ignored field, people like Don Veinot, Wally Tope and of course, Dr. Charles Beach. I believe that a determined and Spirit-filled Christian with a heart broken over the harvest field of the cults will be someone used of God to deliver them, since the need is inconceivably vast. It will be and has been my prayer that none of you will ever again drive past a Kingdom Hall or hear of Unificationists teaching in Christian churches and remain unchallenged to rise up and respond. And I have prayed dearly that your eyes be opened to behold the harvest, to consider the vast and uncharted lands whereby your dearest and best commitment of time, prayer and study will be needed to work them.

Yes, the cost is great, and the struggle most intense. Oh, but saints of God, how sweet is the victory! A cultist who comes to Christ often becomes one of the most zealous and passionate believers you'll ever meet. Seeing the unashamed wonder and praise that lights up the face of a born again ex-Remnant Fellowship member over their encounter with the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most moving manifestations of mercy you'll ever see. We've known many believers who came out of bondage into the light of Jesus and whose testimonies are nothing less than stories of the greatest deliverances from the deepest pits of darkness. There need to be more of them – and you can play a part in this great work of outreach in the Cultworld.

But now the ball is in your court. The harvest fields are before you, and the time is short. Somewhere, there's a cultist waiting for you to invite them in beyond the door you can shut them out with, a mission field at your doorstep, and a soul Jesus has sent your way to see His Glorious Light. May the Spirit of God breathe upon you and charge you to be the witness you can, you should, you must be to the cultists at your door, and beyond them!

I close with an intercepted e-mail that our ministry found that was being circulated by Mormon apologists concerning their views of Christianity: it shows that the Cultworld isn't waiting for the Church to make up its mind on contending for the true faith:

*"Our people who study the Pentecostal movement in Latin America see it as a good thing. Why? Because it provides considerable moral discipline for a poor segment of the population. For one thing, by attempting to fight the consumption of alcohol they are able to make more disposable income available and thereby increase the quality of life for families, who then can spend their income on such things as books, education, medicine and so forth. And **when these Pentecostals begin to be literate, they are ready for our missionaries.**"*

Will you do for the Truth what cults will do for a lie?

Recommended Reading & Websites

General Books On Cultic Movements

Charts Of Cults, Sects And Religious Movements – H. Wayne House (Zondervan, 2000)

Cults, New Religious Movements And Your Family – Richard Abanes (Crossway, 1998)

Zondervan Guide To Cults And New Religions Series – Ed. by Alan Gomes (Zondervan)

Apologetics Index - 15,233 pages of Research Resources - <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/index.html>

Online Articles

Cult Evangelism: Which Methods Are Effective? by Robert M. Bowman

<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/crj/crj-jrnl/web/crj0045a.html>

Fantasies, Legends, and Heroes by Bob Passantino

<http://answers.org/apologetics/fantasy.html>

The Do's And Don'ts In Witnessing To Cultists by Walter Martin

<http://www.waltermartin.org/articles.html#witness>

Confronting Cults On The World Missions Fields by Paul Carden

http://www.thecenters.org/Articles/confronting_article.html

"You Shall Know Them By Their Fruits" by Joy Veinot

http://www.midwestoutreach.org/journals/their_fruits.html