



Reachout Subject Guide

5 Things to Know About Cult Converts

There is an understandable caution in most Christians meeting cult members. It can seem like playing with fire. It is true that speaking to a Jehovah's Witness, or a Mormon, is not like speaking to someone indifferent to spiritual things. The cult member has a faith, a world-view, and carefully structured arguments. Reachout Trust exists to equip Christians to meet the challenge of the cults with confidence, to, '*...destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...*' (2 Cor.10:5)

Christians should have confidence that arguments are destroyed, every lofty opinion can be taken captive to obey Christ, that cultists do come to faith; the proof of it is around us in this very ministry. Since faith is so important to a cult member, when they convert, their new-found faith in Christ is doubly so. When a Mormon, or Jehovah's Witness comes to faith, what we do to support them is vital. That word 'vital' comes from the Latin, 'vitalis,' from vita meaning life. We offer more than correction, we offer life.

Here are 5 things we need to know about cult converts:

1. Their decision is courageous

The former cult member has made a huge decision and we need to appreciate how big it is. The serious-minded Jehovah's Witness or Mormon invested everything in their former faith and has walked away from something that defined their life. They now look to fill the void left by their former faith. We need to appreciate the significance of their decision and support them as they take their first steps as new Christians.

2. Their sacrifice is significant

Often, they will have held positions of responsibility in their former faith. Many will have been teachers, missionaries, or preachers in their former faith. They may have been the equivalent of a Christian pastor, and enjoyed the attendant respect and responsibilities. Seasoned and respected leaders are suddenly starting again, unable to fill the simplest of roles in their new-found faith. We should understand the sense of loss of self-worth and the helplessness they experience as they build their new faith from the ground up.

3. Their world-view is shattered

The way they defined the world, and made sense of it, is lost. Their answers to the most fundamental questions – where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? What is the purpose of life? - have been swept away. It is tempting to parade them as 'a trophy for Christ,' have them repeatedly testify of their 'deliverance,' involve them in cult ministry; but that is a huge mistake. We should appreciate their urgent need to lay firm Christian foundations, to spend a few years simply learning to walk in their new faith. They need ministering to rather than ministering to others.

4. Their new community is confusing

They were once, perhaps, the go-to-guy if you wanted something done, had a theological question, or needed wise counsel. Now they sit at the back, feeling redundant, and doubly so because they are, in many cases, used to every member of a church having a role. There is so much about their new friends they don't understand. Why are so many Christians passive when Jehovah's Witnesses are actively knocking doors? Why do so many come to church to be little more than an audience? 'Why do I feel surplus to requirements?' If we are wise, we will nurture this ambition to serve, disciple the new believer, draw them into that happy band of 20 percent that 'get everything done around here.'

5. Their past experience is valuable

There is so much they have to, not only learn, but unlearn. Ideas and understandings that have had years to bed themselves in, must be removed and replaced. But they are removed, and replaced, and the former cultist will come to celebrate their freedom in Christ, appreciate the elegance and simplicity of the truth, and develop an ambition to 'pass it on'; just as they once did for the organisation they have left. They have faithfully knocked doors, patiently studied their books, developed gifts of learning and passing on what they have learned. They have carried responsibilities, led congregations, inspired and encouraged others.

Once they have shown themselves competent and capable in handling truth, motivated in reaching out to others, naturally gifted in leading and/or teaching in some form, why would we not draw on that valuable experience they bring? Not all former Mormons/Jehovah's Witnesses want to be involved in a ministry to the cults. Sadly, some find it is the only place they are allowed to be of practical help, and they often want nothing more than to simply serve. We need to help them grow and to learn to trust them as they grow. As a church we should appreciate the enormity of their decision to follow Jesus and leave behind a whole life and lifestyle.

We need to understand how humbling it can be to step from behind a lectern into a passive role on the back seat, to step away from being the teacher and become the one who is taught.

We need to be pro-active in filling the great cavern left when they abandoned a whole world-view that once informed every major decision they ever made.

We must realise how so much of what we take for granted is truly strange and awkward for them. So many questions are thrown up on this journey and patience and understanding are vital.

And we urgently need to appreciate how they might be of truly valuable service in and to the church if we would only teach and disciple them for acts of service.

God preserve us from making them into 'ex-cultists!' I often say I am not an ex-Mormon asking, 'Why should I be identified by what I was when you are identified by what you are?'

Keep in touch with us. Reachout is always ready to come and speak to groups and churches, ready to sit down with cult-members prepared at last to listen, ready to advise those who have finally taken that step away from error and don't know, perhaps, what comes next.



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