



Reachout Subject Guide

Successful Witnessing

One of the constant challenges Christians face in witnessing is the fear of getting it wrong. I believe this stems from a misunderstanding of what witnessing is, what is expected of us, and what we might expect from our efforts.

Know who we are Dealing With

Often it might seem that the battle is against the mind but it is the *'god of this world who has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...'* (2 Cor.4:4) We must be spiritually prepared for these encounters - prayer is vital. Jesus instructed His disciples in Mark 9:29 to fast and pray if they wanted to see those affected by Satan released.

We are not fighting against or struggling with the people who are in the cults. Paul reminds us, *'We do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.'* (Eph.6:12) That is why we need the armour of God about which Paul went on to write. Our fight is not against flesh and blood but against Satan. We therefore need to take time to learn from Scripture his sure destruction:

- About Satan's works - 2 Corinthians 2:11 (we are not ignorant of Satan's designs)
- About our armour - Ephesians 6:10-16 (Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might)
- About Satan's end - Hebrews 2:14,15 & 1 John 3:8 (The Son appeared to destroy the devil's works)

We are not to be ignorant of Satan's devices and to be aware of our place of safety in Christ.

See God's Heart

Jesus expressed God's heart to the outcasts in healing lepers, dining with sinners, dying alongside criminals, and forgiving his enemies.

Take careful note of the *whosoever* in John 3:16, and the *not wishing that any should perish* of 2 Peter 3:8,9. God has made it plain that He wants to save all those who at present are misled by various cults.

Acts 1:8 tells us to go to the 'Samaritans.' When the Jews heard this they would have been astounded because Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. These verses teach us to go to those whom we would not normally associate with. 1 Peter 3:15 also shows that we should **always** be ready to give a reasoned defence for the hope that is in us to **anyone** that asks.

Fruit of the Spirit

If we are to do this, we need to experience the reality of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Galatians 5:22 tells us that this includes among other attributes love, patience, gentleness, and self-control. All are vital if we are to effectively witness to cult members.

Fear is often a weapon that Satan will use to stop us talking to cult members but remember he is not *all*-powerful. His works have been destroyed - 1 John 3:8. He wants to keep the 'Christ in you' out of his way - 1 John 4:4. Do also remember that our inheritance is not fear. Paul counsels Timothy, '*The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*' (1 Timothy 1:70) and John reminds us, '*perfect love casts out fear.*' (1 John 4:18)

Just as David prepared himself for battle with Goliath in the years he looked after sheep, we to need to prepare ourselves before God. When David went out to fight Goliath he had already defeated the lion and the bear. Through dedication and practice, he was now ready for the giant. The heat of battle is no place for experimentation. We must:

Learn to **pray** with authority, setting forth the truth plainly (2 Corinthians 4:1-4)

Learn to rely on the **Holy Spirit** not just good presentations (John 14:26)

Learn to be **Patient** (Galatians 6:8-10)

The Original and the Copy

This is a helpful way of showing the difference between a cult and true Christianity and at the same time taking away any sense of confrontation. Talk about the difference between a copy and an original. Ask them which one they would prefer, the original, or the good but lesser copy. Compare the original (the Bible) with what they are bringing and let the Word of God speak.

We can also see from this illustration that until there is an original to compare with you do not know if you have a copy or not. A good copy will always be best until it is put against the original. Yes we do need to point out the errors of the group the people are in, but unless we show them something better there is no reason for them to change. By using the illustration of the original and the copy you do not spend all the time condemning the group but showing them that there is something better.

Discernment

The Scriptural basis for discernment is described in 1 John 4:1 (*test the spirits*) and 1 Thessalonians 5:21 (*test everything, hold fast to what is good*). There are five pointers that help us know what to look for in any group or person we may encounter.

- Does the Word of God forbid the experience or teaching?
- Does the Word of God forbid the principle behind the experience or teaching?
- Is the outcome glory to and recognition of God rather than man?
- Is the fruit to make the individual more Christ-like?
- Is the person more outgoing to others rather than inward looking?



The Myth of the Killer Text

“What do you say to a Mormon/JW?” I often get asked this question and my reply is always, “There is no killer text you know.” “I know that”, is the reply, “but what do you say?” So I share a text and they say, “I tried that and it doesn't work.” To which I reply, “What does it look like when it works?”

It isn't as simple as dropping some text into a conversation, standing back and waiting for a reaction. It involves relationship, understanding, preparation, and patience and there are no short cuts.

Some see apologetics and witnessing as an assimilation of handy facts that can be brought out and used on appropriate occasions. These *cold, hard facts are to be marshalled when 'opportunity' presents itself and are expected to do all the work that relationship, preparation, patience and understanding are meant to do.*

When the facts 'don't work', or worse, are forgotten in a moment of crisis, the Christian is driven back to his books to relearn what he thought he knew better, or to glean more facts that might prove more effective next time. Or he just gives up, declaring 'it is a waste of time talking to these people.'

When I am better prepared, know my Bible, when I understand what I am facing, I can be more relaxed and real in my conversations and take pretty much the same approach with everyone.

How to Never Fail

I see witnessing in stages and consider myself as having succeeded if any stage is successfully negotiated:

1. I get into a conversation about how they are doing. What do you say to a JW? You say, “Hello. How are you?” I don't understand why some people think that having a JW at the door gives them the right to ignore the normal rules and courtesies of human society. You wouldn't speak to your neighbours the way I hear some people talk to a JW.
2. I tell them I am a Christian. Not as though challenging them to make something of it but simply declaring that I see the world through Christian eyes.
3. I get them to talk about what they believe, rather than telling them what they believe and correcting and/or condemning it. Even when you are right in your understanding it is well to get them to articulate their beliefs because it can be advantageous. They can't deny it if they have said it; they have heard themselves say it and that is important; they may say it in a way that gives you fresh insight and opportunity. They may say something to inspire you with an answer.

The clearest insight, the greatest revelation of God is Jesus Christ, and God's plan and purpose is plainly set before us in God's Word in the Bible, is focussed on the Cross of Calvary, and an empty tomb. It is lived out in the community of faith that is the Christian Church and the quest for “spirituality” finds its goal in the Christian message.

It is not a question, then, of judging the comparative qualities and deficiencies of respective groups but of putting each group we come across up to the light of the gospel and judging them by God's revealed truth. *It is not so much a case of being expert in the error but of being proficient in the truth against which any error must be judged.*

So you have entered into a polite conversation, explained that you see the world through Christian eyes, shown an interest in having them speak for themselves, now you are ready for step four.

4. I get to share in more detail what I believe; I have listened now I can reasonably expect them to offer the same courtesy. Having heard how they see things, I am leading them through my faith world not just telling them things.



The Right Direction

I work from number 1 to number 4 and **with each step I consider myself as having succeeded more and more**. Some people work from number 4 to number 1 and with each step consider themselves as having failed more and more.

'I set out to 'tell 'em, they wouldn't be told, and it ended in a quarrel and a slammed door. You just can't talk to these people!'

I always try and **take the shortest route to the Cross**, which is not always short, but I try to avoid minor issues (cross or stake; blood transfusions etc) by listening and then trying to bring the conversation back to what I consider needs to be addressed.

I have simple texts memorised but I never expect them to be "killer texts" because killer texts do not exist. I do expect them to throw out a challenge, to use them confidently, and I expect them to stick. An obvious one for a JW would be John 20:28 where Thomas addresses Jesus as, *'My Lord and my God'* and is commended by Jesus for his confession. One I use for Mormons is John 5:24 because it challenges their view of salvation as being achieved by a mixture of faith and works. 1 John 5:13 works alongside this very well. I also have some texts about the nature of God because their view of God is so unbiblical.

I don't throw these texts out as though they are truth bombs that will explode to devastating effect. Rather, they form an integral part of the discussion that move the conversation along in a direction I already know and anticipate. Think of yourself as building on the good work done by other Christians met before you. Think of yourself as laying a foundation on which others can build after you.

Of course, **these encounters can be brief so I use my knowledge appropriately**, sometimes having the luxury of time to develop a theme, sometimes only being able to share a few appropriate words. But if I move from 1 to 4 then I will never have failed if only because I have shared with them my Christian conviction and shown them Christian charity in taking the time to speak to them.

Who are you Talking to?

It is important to always speak to the person standing before you and not the organisation standing behind them (or the person you encountered last time).

Your theme should not be, 'the trouble with Jehovah's Witnesses.' Your prayer should be, 'Lord, how do I show your love to this person today?'

Finally, this reflects my aspirations and does not describe how I *always* conduct myself. We are all human and it makes no sense to despair because we have not yet attained all that God has for us:

'But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward for what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.' (Philip.3:13-16)

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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