



Opening the Closed Mind

What can you say when Jehovah's Witnesses come to your door?

How do you avoid arguments over the Bible?

How do you help your relatives and friends?

How to get to the heart of the issue

by Randall Walters rev. 1996

Understanding the Problem

It is rare to find a Witness who has not seen or heard information exposing the dishonesty of the Watchtower. Why, then, do they not see a problem? Evidently, something else has prevented them from objectively analyzing factual information. Their minds are trained to *stop short* of doubting the organization - a wall has been erected which says, in effect, "This far you may go, and no further."

What kind of powerful motivation prevents the Witness from entering the "dangerous" waters of critical investigation? The motivation is fear; the underlying problem is *misplaced securities*. The Christian concept of trusting a supernatural God is replaced with a more visible and concrete symbol, namely, the organization; *God's* organization. The Witness learns that serving the organization is the same as serving God. The organization is the mother, God is the father, and the Witness is to obey his "parents." Since the Witness cannot see nor experience real interaction with God, his only tie with God is through the visible organization. It is, in effect, "God" to him (though he would not admit to or recognize it).

Convincing the Witness that the organization is deceptive is like trying to convince a 5-year-old child who loves his parents that his father is in jail for armed robbery - he simply doesn't believe his father is dishonest. In fact, he can't *tolerate* the thought, since he has placed all of his security and trust in his father and mother. The truth is *too fearful and devastating* to consider. Therefore, to protect his source of security, he rejects the factual information as being a lie.

The same is true of the Witness. He knows that if the organization is not *really* directed by God, he has no other tangible security to go to. He says, "Where else can I go?" So he remains within the system as years go by, continuing to ignore the barrage of factual information undermining the entire Watchtower structure. The more and more he ignores the facts, the more narrow-minded and adamant he becomes that he will *never* change, and he is more convinced than ever that he has the truth. He digs himself into a trench, erecting all sorts of mental barricades against his real enemy, which is *doubt*. While this seems incredible to the person trying to reach the Witness with the facts, it is just a simple protective mechanism, keeping the Witness from the trauma of losing his sense of security. In order to rationalize away the false prophecies and inconsistencies of the organization, the Witness must, in effect, deceive himself into thinking there is really no discrepancy in the organization.

While Christians have their security in a spiritual relationship with the person of Christ, Witnesses are taught to put faith in an organization. If they have faith in the organization, they have faith in God. The two are inseparable; so much so, that to lose faith in the organization means a corresponding loss of faith in God. This is precisely why the Witness must protect himself through the process of self-deception. He cannot bear the pain of losing his faith.

Getting Them to Think

Before photocopies of old WT literature are brought out, or before Scriptures are quoted, it is good to establish certain things in the Witness' mind; things that they officially believe, but the individual Witness may not be in full agreement with. The very act of *admitting* these beliefs should not only prove embarrassing to the Witness, but will make him conscious of the narrow, cult-like mentality encouraged by the WT. To avoid being embarrassed and to save face, Witnesses will sometimes lie about what they believe or try and change the subject without answering, but you must make note of what they deny, so that you can prove that they *do* teach it, using their own literature. You thereby force the Witness to see the wall he has established in his mind (which says, "you may go no further"), and he thereby must make a decision to be honest with himself (and risk shifting his securities), or run in fear from such a confrontation. How, then, do we proceed?

Below are several preliminary questions to ask the Witness. These questions do not involve interpreting passages of the Bible (that comes later), but relate to their view of *how to interpret the Bible*, as well as God's way of relating to man. You will find these questions very effective with all but the most hardened of Witnesses.

Common Sense Questions

These first three questions establish a foundation of common-sense perceptions about the Bible and Christianity, which are generally denied by cults. This is especially true with Jehovah's Witnesses. Often they will answer *yes* to these questions anyway, to save face or avoid embarrassment. If so, you will need to direct their attention back to their answers when they "deny" them later. *GB* references are to our book, *Thus Saith the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses*, 1996 edition (see address on back to request a catalog).

Do you believe that the Bible was written to all people?

(Acts 17:30; 1 Cor. 1:2)

Do you believe that true Christians have always existed somewhere in the last 2000 years?

(Matt. 28:19, 20 - The Watchtower teaches this, but cannot actually point to a single group or person as evidence of this, since no one in history believed as they do.)

Do you believe that anyone, anywhere, who just had a Bible, and no other literature, could understand it and be saved?

("No" answer reveals that they believe the Bible is not enough, but a leader or organization is needed; "Yes" answer is contradictory to Watchtower teaching - GB 36, 37, 147, 148)

Next, a statement about the dangers of various religious organizations should be made, such as, "Today more than ever before there are many religious groups which lead people astray from true Christianity. Let's see if we can agree on certain identifying marks of such groups." Then proceed with the following objective questions. It is better to leave the questions "third person" (or hypothetically apply them to yourself) rather than applying them directly to the person you are speaking with, or his organization. Instead of saying, "Does your organization...?" you might say, "What if an organization...?" or "What if I...?" That way you avoid getting their defenses up. They will have to apply it to themselves soon enough in the conversation, or you can draw the connection later yourself. Get them to see the point *before* it hurts! (2 Sam. 12:1-14)

Do you think a person should examine not only the teachings, but also the history of any religious organization before deciding it is the truth?

(A history of deception and unfulfilled prophecies is most incriminating!)

What if I joined one of these groups and later discovered fraud at the top of the organization, or that they have altered their teachings or prophecies? Should I stay in it?

(Most cults have had serious scandals and shake-ups involving fraud and politics at top levels. Since they claim to be God's only true people, their claim would be highly suspect.)

Both Deuteronomy 18:20-22 and Matt. 24:11, 23-27 warn us of false prophets. How would one identify a false prophet using these verses?

(They speak in the name of God and it doesn't come true!)

What would you think if members of a certain religion were not allowed to read other religious literature?

(Shows authoritarian rule and fear of the facts, as well as an inability to use discernment. Witnesses are not allowed to read other religious literature.)

The Mormons claim that one must study their books to attain to an accurate knowledge of the Scriptures, even though they also use the Bible. What do you think of that?

(All cults believe this, as their leader is the sole interpreter of Scripture - same is true with Witnesses.)

If I were examining the Mormons, etc., do you think it would be a good idea to read books by ex-members?

(A difficult question for the cult member to answer, as it is self-incriminating if they say yes or no. If they say, "no," show how easy it would be to get sucked into a cult that you haven't fully examined. If they say, "Yes," then ask them why they haven't read books by ex-members of their group.)

What if all dissent from a religion is seen as evidence of pride or sin?

(Cults are authoritarian by nature and will excommunicate members for any breach of policy or disobedience to the organization. GB 159)

What if this religion is not open to public criticism? What if they do not allow for public debate?

(Reveals just how scholarly their doctrinal foundation is, as well as their appeal to reason.)

Questions to Provoke Thought

These are questions that cause the cultist to see the inconsistency of their position on certain issues. What you are doing is making them commit to a Biblical or scholastic precedent, then allowing them to see that the Watchtower actually *denies* that precedent. They will either struggle with the contradiction (though not displaying the struggle visibly) or they will shut their minds off to further discussion on the issue by either trying to change the subject or running away. Rather than being third person objective questions, or applying them generally or hypothetically, you are now applying it to the Watchtower specifically. Since the organization is the real culprit rather than the individual Witness, apply the questions to the organization, not "Jehovah's Witnesses." This will help avoid the feeling that they are being personally attacked.

Can the Bible be interpreted correctly only by the Watchtower?

(Acts 17:11; I John 2:26, 27 - "Yes" answer contradicts Scripture, "No" answer contradicts Watchtower - GB 150, 151, 155)

What method does the Watchtower use to interpret Scripture?

They say that they just accept it literally, and interpret symbolic passages by other passages that bear on the discussion; *Reasoning*, p. 204, 205. Yet they break this rule continually, often opting for a "symbolic" understanding of something that they cannot accept literally due to their preconceived theology. Example: John 3:3, 5, 7; Matt. 24:26-30; John 1:1; Rev. 1:7.

Scholars talk about the historical, grammatical, interpretive method of understanding what the Bible says. (Explain.) Do you think this is a good method?

(Defined as taking into account the historical and cultural meaning of a saying or word and its linguistic significance in order to interpret it correctly. The Watchtower ignores the historical significance of countless passages and interpret the Bible arbitrarily. Example: Luke 16:16-31 and John 10:16.)

Do prominent scholars, either secular or religious, support the Watchtower interpretations of Scripture?

(The scholarly community as a whole is against Watchtower interpretation, both from the Christian and agnostic sectors, due to their dishonest methods and theological bias. While the Watchtower loves to quote scholars on certain points, it is almost always a half-truth or is taken out of context to support their position. At times they will quote from obscure sources which they present as being noteworthy sources, yet are not even recognized in their field as authorities. GB 117-129)

Does the Watchtower believe all other "Christian" groups are false?

(Yes, they do. GB 147, 149, 154; Matt. 7:3; 25:31-46)

Does a person have to be part of the Watchtower organization to be saved?

("Yes" answer cannot be supported by Scripture (Mark 9:37-41). "No" answer contradicts the Watchtower. GB 36, 37, 147, 148)

What does the Watchtower consider as proof that they are the real Christians? Are these marks exclusive to the Watchtower, or are they shared by other religions?

(examine each one individually)

(They will give certain standards based on outward appearance rather than heart factors; their "love" is not unconditional love (Matt. 5:43-48), but is dependent upon obedience to the organization: they substitute friendship based on common doctrinal positions for friendship based on the love of Christ. Challenge the "exclusiveness" of each mark by comparing with other cults.)

Review and apply questions from the first section (*Common Sense Questions*) to the Watchtower now. You are causing them to think about how the WT denies these basic truths.

Force Them to Face the Facts

If you make it this far, you have caused no little disturbance in the mind of the Witness, though he/she may not show it visibly. It is important to be calm and kind above all. You are forcing them to break down the wall they have erected in their mind that protects them from questioning the authority and security of their "mother." The following questions are designed to force them to face the fact that the organization has claimed to be a prophet "like Ezekiel and Jeremiah"; that they have made false prophecies in the name of Jehovah over and over; that they are a relatively new religion that supports itself primarily through distribution of literature; and that they claim to be the only channel or mediator to God. If they deny the truthfulness of any of this, challenge them to investigate the Watchtower material along with you, so that you can see the light as well. If they defend the Watchtower position, review the former questions once more, so that they will at least see that they are no different than any other cult.

Does the organization or leadership claim to be a prophet of God?

(They have plainly said they are a prophet of God just like Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Compare Deut. 18:20-22. GB 42, 43, 45)

Does the leadership claim special direction from God that others cannot receive directly from God?

(They claim the "faithful and discreet slave" is a channel through which the truth flows from Jehovah down to the average Witness. GB 45. Mark 9:38-42)

Can you come to Christ as your mediator?

(Their answer is "no" for 99.7% of the Witnesses. GB 153)

Has the organization made prophecies that have not come true?

(Deut. 18:20-22. GB 46-66, 81-90)

Have your doctrines changed significantly in the past history of your organization?

(Reveals the uninspired source of their doctrine, as well as their effort to harmonize inconsistencies. GB 156)

How long has this religion been around? Can this be demonstrated historically?

("According to the Bible, the line of witnesses of Jehovah reaches back to faithful Abel." - *Reasoning*, p. 202. They thus try and make it appear as if the Jewish patriarchs and the apostles believed the same way they did, which can be proven false historically. Furthermore, they cannot point to any group or person in the last 2000 years that were "true" Christians, at least until Russell came along. Typical cult reasoning. GB 32)

Does your religion sell anything to support itself?

(2 Cor. 2:17 - while the Watchtower denies selling its literature in more affluent countries, financial reports reveal that 67% of their income comes from the production and door-to-door sales of literature. They are dishonest in this respect. GB 105-112)

The Witness may not even allow you to proceed beyond a few of these questions, as the questions are quite effective in convicting the Witness of inconsistencies and cultic attitudes. Yet, even so, you will have planted seeds of doubt that force them to either think more about what you have said and examine it further, or flee in fear, refusing to allow their mind to open up again on these questions.

One who masters questions such as these actually need not even discuss the interpretation of other passages beyond what are included above. If the Witness admits to believing the above, you simply have to point out that these are the marks of many religious cults. Emphasize that true Christianity:

** Should not fear any examination, and criticism, and need not forbid reading any other factual information.*

** Should interpret the Bible using sound, scholarly methods involving the examination of context, language and history.*

** That no other book but the Bible should be necessary (2 Tim. 3:16). and no special man or group of men should be needed to interpret it. as I John 2:27 tells us that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things.*

** Christianity has been around for 2000 years, and we can trace all the way back to its origins.*

** The church is to be supported by collections and offerings, and ministers have the right to be paid. (1 Tim. 5:17, 18; 1 Cor. 9:14; 16:2)*

** True Christianity has Christ as its mediator, for ALL.*

** Jesus warns us against those who claim to be prophets, yet whose prophecies go unfulfilled.*

** All Christians have access to the same truths.*

** Truth is not afraid of error, nor the devil. Only the devil runs from the truth.*

Finally, remember: the closed mind of the Witness cannot be opened solely by the outsider. There must be a willingness on their part to reason, to question, to agree on common principles. Otherwise, you are wasting your time. An obstinate and sarcastic person should be left alone until a more advantageous time, lest you shame yourself and the Lord by your lack of perception (Matt. 7:6). Above all, pray for a humble heart and the proper timing regarding what to say. *A word rightly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. As a ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovor on a hearing ear.* - Proverbs 25:11, 12.

Footnote:

1. To a person desperate for alibis in order to reinforce their faith in the organization, almost any supportive argument will be used, regardless of its validity or logic. The most effective book of clever and not-so-clever ready-made alibis is the Watchtower publication, *Reasoning From The Scriptures*. In it, the Witness can excuse away false prophecies, change the subject, reinterpret Bible passages, and bluster their way through almost any situation using silly and inconsistent reasoning. Yet, it is sufficient "proof" for the Witness who is desperate for an alibi. For example, see the Watchtower "reasoning" on why they are not false prophets on pages 134-137 of the *Reasoning* book. They there argue that others in the Bible had "wrong expectations" at times, but this did not make them false prophets. What they fail to mention, of course, is that such "wrong expectations" were not prophecies!

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