

A Christian Response to Cults

Gate Breaker Ministries

[These notes are sequenced with the Power Point PDF by the same name - 2020]

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FOREWORD

Greetings to those of you who will be taking this course! It is wonderful to see Christianity growing at an amazing rate today. We see the gospel message beginning to have an impact in parts of the world that appeared unreachable just a few years ago. Reports from third world countries about miraculous conversions and power encounters are almost becoming daily news in the Christian media. It was to be expected because Jesus told us that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in the entire world as a witness to the nations before the end would come (Matthew 24:14). God's desire is for all men to be saved (1st Timothy 2:4). Therefore, the gospel message is going forth into the entire world.

However, there are other messages going forth in the world as well. Jesus warned us that there would be "many" false christs and false prophets in the last days. Today, there are winds of doctrine constantly blowing against Christianity. People, unwittingly, get drawn into the net of new age psychics on telephone hotlines, spiritists acting as mediums to contact the dead, bizarre UFO interest groups, and science fiction cults. Now add to these a host of theological cultures that deviate significantly from the basic tenants of historic Christianity, and we see that the messages get subtler and people get more confused.

Youth and adults often have hidden questions about cults that are not adequately answered. What makes a group a cult? Who decides that it is a cult? Do the people in the cult know they are in a cult? How should we act around them? What is the occult? These and many other questions arise in our hearts as we grow in the Lord and realize that not everyone sees things the way we do. Unfortunately, these questions are often left unanswered because of a tendency in Christianity to ignore the subject. Also, there is a feeling of inadequacy about how to effectively deal with it. This course was created to help Christians have adequate answers to their questions.

It is my hope that as you take this course you will gain a heart of compassion for those in the cults who are without Jesus and without hope. John 3:16 teaches us that God loved the whole world and gave His Son for everyone. He wants to see those imprisoned in the cults set free. As you take this course, prayerfully ask the Lord to give you a greater compassion for the people in these groups that we will be studying.

Blessings!

Dr. Stan Fleming
Gate Breaker Ministries

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The Study of Cults

INTRODUCTION

WHY STUDY THE CULTS?

1. The Lord Jesus warned us that in the last days there would be false Christs and false prophets trying to deceive God's people.

"Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." -- Matthew 24:4-5

"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." -- Matthew 24:24

2. The Apostle Paul told the Galatians *"there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ."* -- Galatians 1:7

a) Pervert -

b) What is the simple Gospel? 1st Corinthians 15:1-4

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

c) Paul also warned the Corinthians to be mindful of those who come and preach:

2nd Corinthians 11:4

"another _____"

"a different _____"

"a different _____"

3. The Apostle Peter told us *"always be ready to give a defense"* -- 1st Peter 3:15
4. Jude tells us *"to contend for the faith"* -- Jude 3

WHAT WERE SOME EARLY CHURCH HERESIES AND PROBLEMS?

1. Denial that Jesus Christ came as a human being in the flesh (2nd John 7).
2. The worship of angels (Colossians 2:18)

3. Justifying sexual immorality because of the doctrine of grace (Jude 4).
4. Exploiting Christians for money (2nd Peter 2:3)
5. Scoffing that Jesus will not come again (2nd Peter 3:3-4)
6. Producing doubt that the resurrection already occurred (2nd Timothy 2:17-18).
7. Teachers would forbid marriage, restrict certain types of food (1st Timothy 4:1-6), believe fables (2nd Timothy 4:3), embrace worldly philosophy, and follow demonic doctrines (1st Timothy 4:1) as well as satanic “angels of light” (2nd Corinthians 11:14).
8. On top of this, the faithful Christian had to contend with the other religions of Rome, Greece, Wicca (Diana of the Ephesians, Acts 19), as well as the occult (Simon the sorcerer, Acts 8:9; Elymas the sorcerer, Acts 13:8; spirit of divination, Acts 16:16).

WHAT DOES THE WORD CULT MEAN?

1. Cultivation
2. A group that has a strong fad or interest
3. Strange religious groups with false teachings.

WHAT IS A RELIGIOUS CULT?

1. A group of people gathered around someone's misinterpretation of the Bible or misunderstanding of God Almighty. Their teachings deviate from the historical biblical view of God, doctrine, or the infallibility of the Bible. Cults deny the doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity of Jesus Christ. Cult groups normally center on a strong, magnetic personalities who claim to have a new revelation that has more authority than the Bible.

WHAT DOES OCCULT MEAN?

1. Hidden or secret things.
2. Whereas *cult* refers to a group of people, *occult* refers to a world view.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIZARRE END TIME CULTS?

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

1. The word “Christian”.
2. The word “biblical”.
3. Biblical Christianity:

WHAT ARE EIGHT ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES OF HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY?

1. Christians believe in the Inspiration of the Bible.
 - "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue." 2 Samuel 23:2
 - “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16
 - “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:20-21
 - “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David.” Acts 1:16 (NIV)
2. Christians believe in the Trinity: that within the nature of the ONE GOD there are Three Eternal Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The Three Persons of God:

- “Then God said, Let us make man in Our image." Genesis 1:26
- “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19
- “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' Matthew 3:16-17 (NIV)

The Oneness Of God:

- "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one!" Deuteronomy 6:4
- "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Ephesians 4:6
- "Jesus answered . . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9 (NIV)
- "He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God." Colossians 1:15 (NIV)
- "And I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplication; and they will look upon Me whom they pierced. Yes, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son." Zechariah 12:10
- "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Ghost . . . You have not lied to men but to God." Acts 5:3-5 (NIV)
- "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God." Isaiah 44:6

3. Christians believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ.

- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:1,14
- "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.'" John 8:58
- "God was manifested in the flesh." 1 Timothy 3:16
- "For in Him (Jesus) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Colossians 2:9

4. Christians believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ.

- "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit . . . for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 1:18,20
- "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35
- "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14 (NIV)

5. Christians believe in the Substitutionary Atonement of Jesus Christ's death.
 - “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” 1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)
 - “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7
 - “To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” Revelation 1:5
 - “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him [Christ] the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:6

6. Christians believe in the Literal Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead.
 - “Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them . . . Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” Luke 24:36,39
 - “I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” John 10:17-18
 - “Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days . . .' But the temple he had spoken of was his body.” John 2:19,21 (NIV)

7. Christians believe that Salvation is a Gift that comes through Faith in Christ alone.
 - “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9
 - “A man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” Galatians 2:16

8. Christians believe in the Literal Return of Jesus Christ (The Second Coming).
 - “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11 (NIV)
 - “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him.” Revelation 1:7

Note: There are other scriptural truths that Christians believe which are too time-consuming to outline here. Some examples are the existence of Heaven (Matthew 5:12); the existence of Hell (Matthew 25:34, 41); Eternal Judgment (Hebrews 6:2; 9:27); Repentance from Dead

Works (Hebrews 2:38; 6:1); Water Baptism (Acts 2:38; 10:47); the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2-4; 8:15-17; 19:6); the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1-6), and others. While Christians may have different views about these or other teachings, there is a general sense of agreement about the essential doctrines of Christ and the Bible highlighted in this lesson. The old expression says, “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; but in all things, charity.”

HOW CAN CHRISTIANS HELP PEOPLE CAUGHT UP IN CULTS?

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Prayer | 2 nd Corinthians 10:4-5 |
| 2. Love | John 3:16 |
| 3. Witness | 1 st Timothy 2:3-4 |
| 4. Training | 1 st Timothy 4:1-6 |

Overview of Modern Cults

INTRODUCTION

THREE PROBLEM AREAS OF CULTS

1. Sociological
2. Psychological
3. Theological

EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTS

1. Revelation that _____ the bible and historic Christian doctrine.
2. Standard Christian terms _____ with new meanings.
3. _____ - they think that they are the only true church.
4. Authoritarian _____ - often very intense, strong - willed, charismatic (not meaning spirit-filled.)
5. Rules - usually _____ and _____, with harsh discipline for the breaking of rules.
6. _____ in recruitment and fund raising.
7. Isolation from _____ in an emotional and psychological way.
8. Use of _____ control techniques.

EXAMPLES OF CULTS IN RELATIONSHIP TO WORLD RELIGIONS

1. Hinduism -----

2. Buddhism -----
3. Islam -----
4. Christianity -----

WHAT CAUSES PEOPLE TO JOIN SOCIALLY DEVIANT GROUPS?

1. Attraction:
2. Met needs:
3. Identification:
4. Deception:
5. Rationalization:

THE JESUS OF THE CULTS AND RELIGIONS

Here are examples of how various cults and religions have deviated from the biblical view of Jesus Christ.

1. *Bahai*: He was one of nine great world manifestations. He is not God. He is a prophet beneath Baha'u'llah. Baha'u'llah is the second coming.
2. *Buddhists*: They have no formal place for Jesus in their religion.
3. *Christian Science*: They believe he was only a human man. He was not Christ because Christ is only a divine idea.
4. *Creciendo en Gracia*: Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda is Jesus and the anti-christ.
5. *Freemasons*: To them Jesus was a mystical figure. Jao-bul-on is God, a mixture of Yahweh, Baal, and Osiris. All men have divine potential.
6. *Hare Krishna*: An enlightened vegetarian teacher of meditation, maybe Krishna.
7. *Hindus*: Jesus was a teacher, a guru, or an avatar (an avatar is an incarnation of Vishnu, the Hindu god).
8. *Islam*: Jesus was only one of many prophets sent by Allah to various cultures, he was the Christ and did miracles, but he was not the Son of God, he is not the Savior, and not as great as Muhammad.
9. *Jehovah's Witnesses*: He is Michael the Archangel; the first being God created. He is "a god" but not divine like Almighty God. There is no Trinity.
10. *Jews*: Jesus was not the Messiah; he did not rise from the dead. He was the leader of a

- Jewish sect that appealed to the Gentiles.
11. *Moon's Unification Church*: Jesus was a man who failed. The cross was failure. Moon is the new Messiah.
 12. *Mormons*: He is the spirit brother of Satan; one god in a pantheon of gods; born through physical sex; he had several wives. After his time in Jerusalem he traveled to the Americas preaching to the American Indians and establishing a vast civilization.
 13. *New Age*: To many he is simply an ascended master, guru, and spiritual guide, but not God and not Savior.
 14. *Scientology*: To some he is a false dream implanted in man's memory before birth.
 15. *Spiritists*: He is an advanced medium in the 6th sphere of astral projection.
 16. *Theosophy*: He is no greater than any other since all men are "Christ."
 17. *Transcendental Meditation*: He was an enlightened guru who never suffered for anyone. He discovered his higher self while most others have not.
 18. *Unitarians*: He was a good man that followers mistakenly deified.
 19. *Unity School of Christianity*: Jesus was simply a man who attained "Christ Consciousness"
 20. *Vedanta Society*: Jesus is the special manifestation of the absolute, but still one of many.
 21. *The Way International*: Jesus is the Son of God but not God the Son; they deny the Trinity.

The views about Jesus mentioned above contrast sharply with mainstream Christianity. Though there are thousands of denominations and branches of Christianity that differ on various doctrines, there is a view of Jesus Christ that is accepted almost universally. For instance, below is the Apostle's Creed which was accepted by the Western Church from the seventh century onward. It was based on the Old Roman Creed of the second century. This is often used in baptismal rites. The Eastern Church uses the Nicene Creed which is longer and developed from the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), but it essentially also incorporates the following view of Christ.

I believe in God the Father almighty, I also believe in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell, rose again the third day, ascended into heaven, sat down at the right hand of the Father, thence he is to come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church (meaning universal Church), the communion of saints, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh and life eternal.

WILL THE REAL JESUS PLEASE STAND UP?

1. Matthew 16:13-18 – The important question in our lives.
2. Who is the real Jesus?
 - a. Virgin Birth.
 - b. The Son of God (Immanuel).
 - c. Miracles and heavenly words.
 - d. Died on the Cross.
 - e. Rose from the dead.
 - f. Second person of the Trinity.
 - g. Fulfilled prophecies.
 - h. Coming again.

Answering Mormonism - Part One

"I want to let you know that I'm finally free from Mormonism after more than a year of searching. Thank God. I feel totally and absolutely free from the bonds of Mormonism. My prayers were answered! I've finally come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, in a new and exiting way. For the first time I've felt the love of Christ and have been freed from the constant feelings of condemnation. I'm a sinner, but I'm forgiven! Something I as a Mormon never knew existed. I am now free to love Him instead of just fear Him."¹

-- Pam, a former Mormon

THE MORMON CHURCH TODAY

1. Current size:
2. Headquarters:
3. Books:
4. Evangelism Tactics:
5. Meetings Places:
6. Assets & Power:
7. Some ages:

BRIEF CONTRAST

1. Uniqueness of the Bible
2. The Book of Mormon

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF MORMONISM?

1. Joseph Smith Junior: (1805 - 1844)
 - a. Background
 - b. 1830 - published book of Mormon
 - c. Westward movement.
 - d. Empire Builder.
 - e. 1844 - died in a shootout in Nauvoo, Illinois.
2. Brigham Young: (Lead the Church from 1844 - 1877)
 - a. Split with those who followed Smith's son. (Reorganized Church)
 - b. Westward to the Utah Territory.
 - c. Conquest and Expansion.

¹ James R. Spencer, *Have You Witnessed to a Mormon Lately?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1994), 166.
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THE CORE OF MORMON DOCTRINE

WHAT ARE SOME ANSWERS TO THE CLAIMS OF MORMONISM?

1. Fawn Brodie
 - A. 2nd Timothy 4:2-4
2. The problem with the supposed witnesses:
 - A. The Three Witnesses
 - B. The Eight Witnesses
 - C. Joe needs an eye exam – 2nd Corinthians 11:14
3. Some problems with the book of Mormon:
 - A. Apostle Orson Pratt
 - B. The Book of Mormon reinvents history.
 - C. Almost 4,000 changes.
 - D. Ether 15:30-32
 - E. Mormon 6
 - F. National Museum of Natural History
 - G. Plagiarism

Answering Mormonism - Part Two

“On the subject of divorce the bishop was very bluntly clear and his tone was stern! He explained that since I had, by accepting the Good News, blocked my wife’s ‘eternal progression’ . . . she did have the right to seek a divorce and find a mate that could satisfy her desire for a Celestial Marriage. I asked the bishop if he could find scriptural support for this point of view and he said, “I don’t know of any.””²

-- David, a former Mormon

SOME OF THE FALSE DOCTRINES

1. They teach that God the Father has a body of _____.
2. They are in the process of altering their teaching of _____, that male Mormons can each become gods and rule their own planet someday.
3. They have taught that Jesus _____ into becoming a god.
4. They teach that Satan is the _____ of Jesus.
5. They teach that Jesus was born through _____ with Mary.
6. They used to teach that the blood of Christ was _____ for some sins.
7. They teach that _____ = faith + baptism + obedience to the laws and ordinances + membership in the Mormon Church.
8. They teach the need to keep _____ in order to proxy salvation through baptism for the dead.
9. They teach the doctrine of eternal _____ between men and women who have endless celestial sex propagating spirit children who will inhabit other worlds.

PROBLEMS WITH REVERSALS

² James Spencer, 77.

FALSE PERCEPTIONS

PROBLEMS WITH MORMON BOOKS

WHAT ARE SOME QUESTIONS THEY MAY ASK?

1. *"Why do you challenge our good works? Isn't faith without works is dead?"*

We should not criticize the "good works" of Mormons. The real problem is why they do good works and who they have faith in. So ask them these questions:

- a. Why do you do good works? In what are you placing your faith for salvation?
- b. Do you know that Jesus told us what work that God wants us to work?

"Then they said to Him, 'What shall we do that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them. 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him He sent.'"
John 6:28-29

2. *"Why do you oppose our ideas of becoming gods? Don't you know that the Bible says there are many gods and lords in 1st Corinthians 8:5?"*

They have been taught that this teaches many gods. However, Paul is showing that there may be many demons or idols but only one God. Ask them to read verses 4 through 6, and it becomes clear what Paul is saying.

3. *"Why don't you believe in baptism for the dead like 1st Corinthians 15:29 says?"*

They have made an entire doctrine out of one confusing verse. Actually, this has to do with Paul trying to convince the Corinthians that the resurrection is true. He starts in verse 12 arguing his point. Although Commentators vary over what Paul is signifying with verse 29, they agree that he is not making a case for baptism of the dead. He is possibly referring to a pagan ritual to show that even they believe in the resurrection through their rites of baptism. However, this may be completely symbolic. He may be referring to our baptism and symbolic death in Christ. In other words, if these people at Corinth don't believe in the resurrection to come then why are they getting baptized? They then would be getting baptized not symbolic of a future resurrection but of death, because they will remain dead. Furthermore, it is probably symbolically tied to verse 31 in which Paul, says "I die daily." But whatever the case, it is not a command for us to go out and perform ritual baptisms

for those who have died. This is what the Mormons do.

5. *"Have you prayed about whether the book of Mormon is true or not?"*

This is a subtle way to get the Christian off track. We don't have to pray if heresy is true or not. The book of Mormon has been changed thousands of times because of major errors. The United States National Museum of Natural History refutes the claim of the book. There is obvious plagiarism all over the book. In refutation of this, you can ask them if they have ever prayed if the Koran is true, or Divine Principle by Sun Myung Moon, or I Ching, or any other cult or religious book?

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN WITNESSING

1. Many of them have zeal but not according to Christ's righteousness (Romans 10:2-3)
2. Many don't really understand the differences between Christian doctrine and Mormon doctrine. They are Mormons because their family members are Mormons. Be gentle and share the light.
3. The Mormon leaders made many prophecies that failed to come true. Get a good book on the subject and be ready to show Mormon missionaries the truth.
4. Form prayer groups to pray for any that you know that are caught up in this cult.
5. Make your goal to plant seeds; let the Lord do the conversion.

Answering Jehovah's Witnesses

"My wife and I have probably called on thousands of homes between the two of us. Not once did we encounter anyone who shared their testimony or their faith in Christ with us. Lots of people would say something like, 'Oh, you're that group that doesn't believe in hell' or, 'You don't believe in the Trinity.' Most people spoke to us in negative terms, telling us our beliefs were wrong but never bothering to tell us what was right. Nobody ever said anything about the love of Jesus Christ. No one ever tried to witness to us at the door."³

-- Chuck Love

WHO IS THE WATCHTOWER ORGANIZATION TODAY?

1. Current size:
2. Headquarters:
3. Literature
4. Evangelism Tactics:
5. Meeting Places:

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE WATCHTOWER?

1. Charles Taze Russell: (b. 1852 – d. 1916)
 - a. Background
 - b. 1874
 - c. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society founded in 1896.
 - d. 1914
2. Joseph Franklin Rutherford: (Led Watchtower from 1917 - 1942)
 - a. 1925 – Predicted return of O. T. patriarchs and prophets.
 - b. 1929 - Beth Sarim in San Diego, California.
 - c. 1931 - Isaiah 43:10
 - d. WWII
3. Nathan H. Knorr: (Led Watchtower from 1942 - 1977)
 - a. 1950 - New World Translation
 - b. Missionary push.
 - c. 1975
4. Frederick Franz: (Led Watchtower from 1977 - 1992)

³ Chuck Love, I Was an Elder with the Jehovah's Witnesses: Personal Testimony of Chuck Love," interviewed by Dan Kistler, *Christian Research Newsletter*, 2:3, p. 1.

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a. Honesty Issue.

Franz was the chief translator of *The New World Translation*, but in 1954 his integrity and honesty were challenged in the court case of Douglas Walsh vs. The Right Honorable James Latham Clyde. Franz claimed he could read and translate Hebrew but when he was put to the test in court he could not even translate an elementary passage of Hebrew from Genesis. He finally admitted it.

b. Authoritarian Control.

5. Milton G. Henschel: (Led 1992 until 2000):

a. In 2000 the leadership was reorganized and the responsibilities were divided.

6. Don Adams (Currently leads the Watchtower)

SOME OF THE FALSE DOCTRINES OF THE WATCHTOWER

1. They deny the _____.

Watchtower Doctrine = They believe that Jehovah is God Almighty, Jesus is only a god, and the holy spirit is simply an active force.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19

2. They deny the _____ of Jesus Christ.

Watchtower Doctrine = They believe that Jesus was Michael the Archangel, the first created being, only a man when on earth, not God.

"Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.'" John 10:32-33

3. They teach that the Holy Spirit is only an _____.

Watchtower Doctrine = They believe that the "holy spirit" is only an active force, that it has no personality, and not part of any Trinity.

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you of things to come." John 16:13

4. They say the Resurrection was merely a _____ one.

Watchtower Doctrine = They believe that Jesus was not resurrected in the same

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physical body which was sacrificed on the cross. He was resurrected a spirit being who simply created various bodies with which to represent himself to those who saw and touched him.

"See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." Luke 24: 39

5. They deny that Christ will _____ return to the earth.

Watchtower Doctrine = They believe that Christ returned invisibly to earth in 1914, in secret, and specifically to the Watchtower Organization. According to them, he will not return physically to earth.

"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

6. They teach that the _____ is not immortal.

Watchtower Doctrine = They believe that people do not possess an immaterial nature (soul or spirit) that goes on existing after death, when it ceases its association with the body.¹ Man's spirit is interpreted as the "life-force" within him, and at death, the life-force wanes: "After breathing, heartbeat, and brain activity stop, the life-force gradually ceases to function in body cells."

"And these will go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. 25:46

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER PECULIAR DOCTRINES THEY BELIEVE?

1. The 144,000 elect and "other" sheep.
2. They are to refuse blood transfusions.
3. They forbid the celebration of birthdays.
4. They forbid the celebration of Christian holidays.
5. They are not permitted to pledge allegiance or serve in the military.
6. They are not permitted to wear crosses.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH THEIR TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE?

1. The *New World Translation* has been twisted and changed it in hundreds of places.
2. They replaced the New Testament Greek word for Lord ("kurios") with the name Jehovah in hundreds of places even though not one ancient manuscript uses Jehovah.
3. The five men who supposedly translated it were not scholars, were not very educated, and had no Hebrew or Greek language expertise, and thus no authority to do such a thing.

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4. The vast majority of scholars totally disagree with the Watchtower interpretation.

"Out of all the Greek professors, grammarians, and commentators they [the Watchtower] have quoted, only one (a Unitarian) agreed that 'the word was a god' . . . Ninety-nine percent of the scholars of the world who know Greek and who have helped translate the Bible are in disagreement with the Jehovah's Witnesses. People who are looking for the truth ought to know what the majority of scholars really believe."⁴

5. The Greek scholars that the Watchtower cited as agreeing with their position say they were misquoted and adamantly disagree with the Watchtower's interpretation. These were Julius R. Mantey, Philip B. Harner, and John L. McKenzie
6. For years the Watchtower cited Johannes Greber as the authority that verified some of their New Testament interpretation, but eventually it was discovered that Greber was a spiritist who called on the spirits to help him interpret. Embarrassed, the Watchtower ceased using him as a source, but did not repent of their translation.

WHAT ARE SOME ISSUES TO UNDERSTAND REGARDING THE WITNESSES?

1. The word "Trinity" isn't in the Bible but the concept clearly is presented.
2. John 14:28 - Jesus was quantitatively inferior to the Father but not qualitatively inferior.
3. They look to the Organization as the head and the voice of God in the world.
4. They have been taught that "you" are deceived by the devil and not to listen to you.
5. The sad truth is that the average Witness doesn't think they have a chance of going to heaven (reserved for the 144,000) but they are working hard to gain paradise on earth.

WHAT ARE A FEW WAYS TO WITNESS TO THEM?

1. Walk them through Revelation regarding the Alpha and Omega even in the NWT.
 - a. Rev. 1:8 - Ask them who the verse says "Alpha & Omega" is. They will respond that it is Jehovah God.
 - b. Rev. 21:5-7 - Ask them if this also refers to Jehovah God? They will agree that this does refer to the Lord God Jehovah.
 - c. Rev. 22:13 - Ask them if this refers to Jehovah. They will agree.
 - d. Rev. 1:17-18 - Ask them to read this aloud. Then ask them, "When did Jehovah die?" They will not know how to respond because it is obvious that Jesus is the one who died and this clearly means that Jesus and Jehovah are one and the same.
2. In their translation, take them to some of the Scriptures that weren't changed.
 - a. Isaiah 63:10; Acts 13:2; John 15:26; and John 16:13 still prove that the Holy Spirit is a person with character attributes and not just some active force.
 - b. Isaiah 9:6 gives the Son the name of "Everlasting Father." Also, certain NWT Scriptures still show strong similarities between Jehovah and Jesus: In Ps. 23:1 and John 10:11 both are the shepherd, in Ps. 27:1 and John 8:12 both are the light, and in

⁴ Dr. Julius Mantey, cited by Dr. Walter Martin "The New World Translation", *Christian Research Newsletter* 3:3, p. 5.

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Isaiah 33:22 and Matt. 27:37 both are the King of the Jews.

- c. Furthermore, their translation shows Jesus sitting on the judgment seat (2 Cor. 5:10); baptism in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38); Jesus sending the Holy Spirit (John 16:7); Jesus raising himself from the dead (John 2:19); Jesus as Lord (1 Cor. 8:6); Jesus as the Savior (1 John 4:14; Acts 4:10,12); and Jesus being worshiped (Heb.1:6; Rev.5:11-14).

Answering the New Age / Occult

"All truth is God's truth, whether it be from the Bible or from the mouth of a New Age follower. Nevertheless, Christians must learn to witness to the truth of their faith and to expose the weaknesses of the New Age. Effectively confronting the New Age will take a humble, loving spirit and conscious effort at reaching out to those in the movement. We need to look for legitimate common ground with the New Age . . . the New Age raises crucial issues for the modern world. This can be used as a springboard in communicating Christ to the New Age. We can agree on some things . . . At the same time we affirm the common ground between the New Age and Christianity we must clearly specify and define the differences between the world views. Because the New Age generally believes that all roads lead to God, Christians must clearly explain how Christianity contradicts the One [monism]."⁵

WHAT IS THE NEW AGE?

1. The New Age of Aquarius is an astrological doctrine emphasizing the divinity of every individual and a new evolutionary quantum leap for mankind.
2. It is not a cult organization one joins. Rather, it is a world view that one adopts which opens up the individual to many occult concepts.
3. Some have called it "spiritual aids of all heresies".
4. It is a mixture or umbrella of the following:

Western Secular Humanism	Eastern Mysticism: Hinduism / Buddhism Taoism	The Occult
--- No Christian God --- Evolution --- Man is supreme --- Human potential --- Man is basically good --- Man can become God	--- Pantheism --- Monism --- Relativism --- Transcendental Meditation --- Reincarnation --- Higher Consciousness --- Enlightenment	--- Spiritism --- Animism --- Paganism --- Channeling --- Spirit Guides --- Astrology --- Wicca --- Satanism

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

1. John 8:12
2. John 12:46
3. 1st John 1:5

⁵ Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1986), 173-174.

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4. Romans 13:12
5. Ephesians 5:11

WHAT IS THE OCCULT?

1. Hidden or secret things.
2. Whereas the word *cult* refers to a group of people, the word *occult* refers to a world view. It refers to any secret power gained through witchcraft, neo-paganism, psychic channeling, magic, astrology, Satanism, New Age, Animism, etc.

THE BATTLE OF THE AGES

1. The generations of God's servants have battled with New Age / Occult
 - a. Moses
 - b. Elijah
 - c. Isaiah
 - d. The Lord Jesus
 - e. Peter
 - f. Paul
 - g. John
2. How will this generation overcome it?
 - a. 2nd Timothy 1:7

THE OCCULT EXPRESSES ITSELF IN CULTURE

1. Superstitions:
 - a. Examples:
 1. Ephesians 6:12
2. Activities:

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- a. Examples:
 - 1. John 3:16
 - 2. 2nd Corinthians 4:6
- b. Examples:
- 3. Music:
 - a. Examples:
- 4. Movies and Television:
 - a. Examples:
- 5. Old Testament Scriptures:
 - a. Leviticus 19:26
 - b. Leviticus 19:31
 - c. Leviticus 20:6-7
 - d. Deuteronomy 18:10-13

SOME POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

- 1. An increasing awareness of man's impact upon the environment.
- 2. The desire to be proper stewards of the world's many forms of life.
- 3. An emphasis upon the nutritional health of the human body.
- 4. The realization that mankind has deep spiritual needs not being met.
- 5. The revelation that the new millennium is bringing dramatic spiritual changes.

THE IMPACT OF MODERN WICCA

- 1. Definitions:
 - a. The word *Wicca* is from Old English. From this we get “witch” and “wicked”. Witches define it as “wise ones” but the origin means “bent” or

“twisted”.

- b. Old Testament: the Hebrew word for *witch* means someone who has a familiar spirit (a demon).
- c. New Testament: the Greek word for witch or sorcerer is *pharmakeia* from which we get the word pharmacy.

2. The Great Goddess Diana:

- a. The modern Diana has morphed from the Diana of the Ephesians, the Diana of the Romans, and the Artemis of the Greeks.
- b. Acts 19

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS

Acts 19:23-41.

Verse 27 “*the great goddess Diana . . . whom all Asia and the world worship.*”

The Diana of the Ephesians is not exactly the same as the Diana of the Romans or the Artemis of the Greeks. The Roman Diana was the moon goddess, daughter of Jupiter, twin sister of Apollo, and represented as a virgin huntress. This is the counterpart of the Greek Diana. But the Diana of the Ephesians is a combination of these with the many-breasted, lewd Semitic moon-goddess Ashtoreth.

The real issue in Acts 19 is that the merchants were losing money on the sale of statues because of the gospel message

- a. Romans 1:22-23, 25
- 4. Wicca rejects the Bible, God, and the devil:
 - 5. White and Black witchcraft:
 - 6. Magic and control:
 - 7. Eight Sabbats:
 - 8. Halloween: (The most important day in the occult calendar)
 - a. History: Christians have different opinions about participating in Halloween, but here are the origins of it. Halloween comes from an ancient Celtic festival known as Samhain. Some think that Samhain was the ancient Druid god of

the dead. On this night, the Druids not only celebrated the change of seasons but believed that the dead spirits came to harass the living by causing sickness and damaging crops. Bones of slaughtered livestock would be thrown into bon fires and people would dress in costumes and masks as evil spirits, trying to pacify the dead.

- b. In modern times, it is on Halloween that witches believe they have their greatest power as the spirits of the dead come forth to their homes to visit the living. At one time Halloween was called *All Hallows Eve*. This Christian celebration, sometimes held on November 1st and other times on October 31st, was made to honor the saints of church history and offset the tradition of the Druids. However, the pagan celebration eventually corrupted the Christian celebration. Today, it is a secular holiday in which children dress up in various costumes, some of them quite evil, and go house to house for candy.

BRING LIGHT INTO DARKNESS

1. Psalm 18:28
2. Psalm 112:4
3. Micah 7:8
4. Ephesians 5:8
5. 1st Peter 2:9-10
6. Isaiah 9:2
7. Matthew 5:16
8. James 1:17

Prayer and Proclamation: Father God, You loved the world and sent Your Son, Jesus, to save the world from sin. Lord Jesus, I proclaim, as the Scripture says, that You are the Light of the World. In You there is no darkness at all. I want to walk in Your light and not in darkness. Please remove any darkness from my life. Forgive me and cleanse me from any action, word, or thought that has been offensive to You. Help me to cast off all works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Protect me from the darkness of the occult, and give me a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. I proclaim that You will light my lamp because you are gracious, full of compassion, and righteous. I am part of a chosen generation and have obtained mercy from God. Thank You for calling me out of darkness into Your

marvelous light. Thank You for every perfect and good gift. Help me to appropriate and use them. Thank You for lighting my life. Help me to walk as a child of the light. May my light shine before the faces of men that they might give You glory and turn from darkness to light! In Jesus' name, Amen!

HOW CAN WE WITNESS TO THOSE CAUGHT UP IN THE NEW AGE AND WICCA?

1. Read Acts 17:16-34 - Discover Paul's techniques for the common ground approach. When witnessing to those in the New Age, there will probably be some points of common concern about the world that can be a launching place for witness.
2. Listen to them: Ask them to share their spiritual journey. They will probably ask you to then share yours.
3. Share your salvation testimony with them. Let them know that it is more than just a mental acceptance of Jesus but an actual relationship with Him.
4. The New Age Movement says man is "asleep." Let them know that it is much worse than that -- we are dead without Christ. Explain to them that Christ taught redemption, not reincarnation.
5. Ezekiel 13:18, 20 – The Lord is against the concept of magic charms and people who prey upon others by their magic.
6. Acts 19:19 – Those who converted to Christianity from magic cleansed themselves by burning their magic books.
7. Pharaoh's magicians were able to copy certain miracles done by Moses (Exodus 7:11, 22; 8:7) but there came a point when the power of God was too much for them (Exodus 8:18-19).
8. The real issue is not about power in the sense of whether the magic of witchcraft ever works, but it is about salvation. There is no salvation in witchcraft or any other occult religion because salvation only comes through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:10, 12)

Answering Atheism

I gradually surrendered the intellectual high ground of cold reason: What I do not see with my eyes, or feel with my hands, I will not believe. I could not spar against the Christ I apprehended dimly – I who did not understand cars, or logarithms, or tides or love. It's possible the Gospels are true, I conceded. It's plausible. Intellect can bring you to the brink of belief. Faith is the missing link. I believed: in a leap of the heart as rationally inexplicable as the leap from affection to love. For like love, faith is the heart's knowledge. "Lord," I prayed. "I believe. You are the living God. I will follow you, wherever you lead. I will do your will insofar as you make it clear to me what it is." I did not quail at this largesse [generous gift], this scattering of blank checks. I did not add, "but be merciful, Lord. Be sensible." With an air of adventure, of rusty doors wrenched from their sockets, revealing fresh vistas, I prayed: "Show me, Lord. What should I do?"⁶

Anita Mathias

INTRODUCTION

1. Terms:
 - a. _____: The belief that one cannot, or at least does not, know reality, or especially, God.
 - b. Atheism: The worldview that claims that no God exists; the universe is all there is.
 - c. Deism: The belief that God created the world and is transcendent; denies that God is immanent in the world, especially in any supernatural way.
 - d. Gnosticism: Early religious cult that held that God is good, matter is evil, and man is saved by knowledge (*gnosis*) of special hidden truths.
 - e. Panentheism: The worldview which holds that "all is in God"; God is to the world as a soul is to a body.
 - f. _____: The worldview that denies God's transcendence and identifies God with His immanence in the universe.
 - g. Polytheism: The belief in many gods.

⁶ Anita Mathias, "I was a teen-age atheist," *Commonweal* v 126, no. 17 (8 October 1999): 13-17.

- h. _____: The worldview that affirms the existence of a personal, infinite Creator of the world, who is immanent in the world, yet transcendent, and unlimited in power and in love.⁷

MODERN ATHEISM

1. Example: Preacher turned Atheist
2. An atheist's perspective.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1. Biblical References to it and comments.
 - a. Scriptures:
 1. Psalm 14:1 and 53:1 both proclaim, “The fool has said in his heart there is no God.”
 2. Jeremiah 5:12
 3. Romans 1:25-23, 28
 - b. Professor Christian B. Anfinsen, Ph.D. in biochemistry, Harvard University and Nobel Prize winner for chemistry would agree with these Psalms as he was quoted saying, “I think only an idiot can be an atheist.”⁸
 - c. Sir Francis Bacon, a renowned Christian thinker, wrote, “A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion.”
 - d. Sir Isaac Newton:

⁷ Most term definitions borrowed from Norman Geisler and Paul Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), glossary. To the term Theism, I took liberty to add “yet transcendent” to sharpen its difference with the other terms.

⁸ John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Darwin's Leap of Faith* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1986), 266.

SOME OF THE ARGUMENTS

1. The Fact of _____.

If God is all-good He will destroy evil.
If God is all-powerful He can destroy evil.
But evil is not destroyed; it still exists.
Hence, there is no such God.

The theist cannot deny that God is all-good, all-powerful, or uncaring.
So, on the surface this seems like a valid argument.

2. The _____ of God. (Jean-Paul Sartre)

If God is not caused by another
And if everything is caused
Then God must be causing his own existence
But a self-caused Being is impossible

3. The Nature of _____. (Jean-Paul Sartre)

If God exists, then all is determined by Him.
But if all is determined, then nothing is free.
However, I am free.
Hence, God does not exist.

BIBLICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL REFUTATIONS

1. The Argument from the Fact of Evil.
 - a. Theists argue that at present God may choose not to destroy evil so that He can preserve the good.
The parable of the wheat and tares – Matthew 13:24-30.
 - b. Theists argue that if God values man's free will then He may choose not to destroy evil until the right time.

- c. Theists object to the atheist's time limit. Just because God has not yet eliminated evil does not mean He won't. Atheists would have to be omniscient to know that God will never eliminate evil.

2. The Argument from the Nature of God.

- a. Theists contend that God is not a self-caused Being; He is an uncaused Being. A self-caused Being is impossible, but an uncaused being is not.

Isaiah 43:10-11 "Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me, I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior."

3. The Argument from the Nature of Freedom.

- a. Theists knock holes in this argument based on their theological belief of free will versus predetermination.
- b. Some say man is not free in the way Sartre is proposing. Men are free to have desires but those desires are predetermined.
- c. Some say both are true. God causes or determines what will happen, and men freely choose how to act. God is the primary cause, and men the secondary cause of what they freely choose.
- d. Some say that God sets certain parameters of existence, but gave men freedom to choose within those parameters.

4. C. S. Lewis's argument of his personal knowledge of inner justice reacting to a world where evil and injustice existed.

5. William Paley's argument of a watch found in a field. How could an irreducibly complex system such as a watch be produced without a designer? The same argument is then carried to the world and universe.

6. The banana problem for atheists.

(Written and presented to a scholarly group of atheists in Ukraine, 2007)

On Truth

Dr. Stan Fleming

Introduction:

I remember sitting outside as a little boy on the steps of our front porch. It was a warm day and I was in the shade. A tiny flying creature buzzed around and landed on my thumb. I was fascinated by this beautiful yellow and black furry insect. I brought my thumb closer to my face to examine this marvel. “Why not pet this small creature,” I thought! Yet, as I put my finger lightly on its back to pet it, it pushed a thin black needle-like object into my thumb. I cried in pain and ran to my mother as the honey bee flew away, leaving its poisonous stinger in me. I felt betrayed. My first “why-did-that-happen-to-me?” experience was mild compared to the experience of others, who through no fault of their own suffer grave injustices and pain. Yet, I was not mature enough to contrast my tiny misfortune to the grief of others. I learned one aspect of truth that day – don’t pet small, beautiful, insects. Yet, deep inside, the experience forced other questions as well. Consider the question: what is truth?

Abraham Lincoln once asked, “How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg?” His answer: “Four; calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg.” Lincoln was a pragmatic politician and not a philosopher, but his witty statement reveals one of the definitions of truth: Truth means the real state of things, agreement with fact, or conformity to actuality. The word *truth* is a noun, a thing, as compared to the word *truthful*, an adjective, which would deal more with ideas of honesty and sincerity. At some level, truth is important to everyone. Yet, if it were easy to grasp, we wouldn’t be discussing it.

Philosophy, religion, science, art, government, social justice, education, media, and other great institutions of people have formed their ideas about truth upon which they build their institutions. Exploring the depth, width, breadth, and height of truth is a course not easily charted, and the task is beyond the limitations of a paper this size. Yet, for my part I want to add a few thoughts regarding the gradual awareness that occurs in the lives of individuals about the idea of truth. This comes through the stages or modes of experience, wonder, and purpose. I contend that it is in one’s approach to the acquisition of truth that spiritual illumination is attained or not. This impacts worldview and, thus, the world, because ideas have consequences. Let’s begin by briefly considering the stages or modes.

Three Stages or Modes:

First: Experience - Experience is the state of being affected from without. It precedes wonder and purpose. Some truth is learned on an experiential level. Have you ever been burned by fire? The pain of that experience taught you a certain amount of truth: Be careful with fire!

People are born into life and are immediately pre-occupied with the challenges of their existence. The day-to-day pressures of physical survival and the changes of growth, not

only physically but mentally and emotionally, in a competitive and sometimes harsh environment delay them in their pondering of the great philosophical questions of life. They exist; they are aware; that is what is of initial importance. Truth during this season of life is simply the discovery by the individual of the conditions of existence – the real state of things. Learning comes through experience. The testing of abilities and limitations of self and that of others (i.e. parents) increases knowledge. This is the truth of the child.

Second: Wonder - Wonder is curiosity, amazement aroused by something extraordinary. It is the question mark of life. It exposes a different layer of truth than mere experience does because wonder looks beyond experience to the question– why? Do you remember thinking, “That is amazing; how did it happen” or “what is life all about?” That is wonder.

Wondering about existence and the universe happens to all people. It emerges in childhood and reoccurs throughout our lives. How we learn to associate with wonder, how we inquire, and the conclusions we draw from these inquiries will either enhance or limit our illumination! Socrates said: “Wisdom begins in wonder.” Thus, if we want to be wise, we must ask questions and continue on that path until wisdom is achieved. It is in the stage of wonder that the great philosophical questions about life emerge, questions like (1) where did I come from, (2) why am I here, and (3) where am I going?

Third: Purpose - Purpose is function, intention, and something to be aimed for. It answers “why - why do we exist?” The proper acquisition of truth derived from our wonder can illuminate us to the nobler, spiritual reasons about purpose for life. This wisdom shapes our character, moral fiber, view of God and responsibility towards people.

Purpose or lack of it is perceived at different levels. For instance, some may say they only find purpose in their work or their family. This is what makes them feel significant or gives them value. Though this may be valid, it only partially answers “why they are here?” and does not answer “where did they come from?” or “where are they going?” It is incomplete, and if work or family is removed, no perceived purpose or value remains. Some think life has no ultimate purpose and become apathetic, even committing suicide or wasting their lives, thinking that nothing really matters. It should also be noted that wrong conclusions about one’s purpose can be detrimental to society. For example, a suicide bomber’s delusion gives him or her untrue perspective of God and purpose; this ultimately harms others.

The Acquisition of Truth:

Once as a little boy, I was lying on the grass looking up at the sky for a long time. Clouds rolled across the blue depth above and my dog, Victor, kept licking my face and blocking my view. I would pet him and then push him away to look again. “The universe goes on forever,” someone had said. Wonder was in my heart. “Can it be true?” I thought. “Is there no wall, no barrier, or no end?” “If there were a wall, what would be beyond it?” Infinity was beyond the grasp of my small mind. I could feel the grass I lay on and my dog, but the universe was a mystery. Though I did not answer the question about the size of the universe on that day, I did recognize one thing; there were large questions in my life that

needed to be answered. Many people have had similar thoughts.

As I see it, truth is acquired through the steps of recognition, commitment, openness, and acceptance. The day that I looked up at the sky I first recognized the large question – does it go on forever? Eventually, I sought out answers and finally accepted the one that made the most sense.

Here are my steps of the acquisition of truth: (1) Recognition that there are questions to be answered; (2) Commitment to finding the answers to the best of one's ability, (3) Openness to any and all ideas that may answer the questions; and (4) Acceptance of the right answers. All of this can be summed up in the idea of going on a quest for the truth and finding it.

Please note that I fully acknowledge that some of the large questions of life seem to end with the conclusion: "It is a mystery". Yet, the revelation that something is a mystery can be an answer in itself. Our brains only weigh about 3.5 lbs. That is not a lot of reasoning power in relationship to the entire universe. The idea that we can reason well enough to learn everything is not practical. At some level faith enters into the picture. Scientific or philosophical empirical data based on observation can only bring one so far in investigation and inquiry. At whatever moment fact ends and assumption begins, that is a point of faith. Faith has been defined as a combination of belief and trust in someone or something. Those things that we call mysteries often lead people to consider ideas about faith and thus ideas about God.

Here is a question to explore: Are we only mind and body? Some think so; they think that there is no spirit that exists. Today, there is a line of reasoning that believes there is no Eternal Creator God, the universe and earth were formed by chance, life also came by chance, and when we die we cease to exist. However, there are many objections to this belief such as intelligent design theories, the existence of morals, premonition, shared dreams, and fulfilled prophecies. Also, clinically documented experiences of dead patients being revived, reporting about an afterlife, support the notion that we are not just mind and body; there is spirit and life after death. Consider three of these.

First, intelligent design theories say that the universe and life are too complex to have happened by chance. The nineteenth century Anglican clergyman, William Paley, argued that if a man found a stone in the field he may say that it had always existed. Yet, if the man found a watch, he would know by its intricate components that it had an intelligent designer. "So it is", Paley argued, "with Creation itself."

Second, the idea that some people are cruel while others express kindness impacted me when I was young. When I was about eight-years old, a teen-age bully hit me in the head with a baseball bat, not because of anything wrong I had done, but simply because he wanted to see how hard he could hit me. Fortunately, I have a hard head. This evil done to me could be contrasted to the goodness of a school mate's kind mother. At the boy's birthday party, each child was supposed to win a prize at one of the games, but somehow, I got overlooked and did not win a prize. I felt terrible as I walked home alone without a prize. However, later in the day, the boy's mother came to our house with a present for me – a brand new squirt gun! Suddenly, life was good! Deep in my heart I was grateful for a prize that I had not

really won. My point in sharing these experiences is this. There is an idea in us about universal moralistic standards of right and wrong; these suggest that there is a judgment of everyone's life by which we live.

Third, unexplainable experiences lead people to believe in the existence of spirit and afterlife. For instance, I had a shared-dream experience when I was a teenager that made me wonder. In those days, I fancied myself somewhat as an agnostic. Only a few times did my family attend church when I was a boy, and I had been indoctrinated in atheistic / evolutionary teachings in the public school. The incident of the dream was unexpected. My best friend Phil and I had the same dream. In the dream we were conversing about whether any type of birds could have four legs. I pointed to one on a perch and said, "See, they can have four legs." When I awoke, I did not remember the dream, but a couple of weeks later, I was walking with my friend when I recalled our conversation about the birds. For some reason at that moment, I did not remember that it had occurred in a dream; I thought of it as real conversation. So I said to Phil in a rather sarcastic manner, "I told you that birds can have four legs." At that moment, he stopped walking and stared at me with shock in his eyes; he remembered having the dream. As I looked in his eyes, I suddenly recognized that it happened in a dream. He yelled, "Were you there in my dream?" We were both quite shocked and talked about the experience for days. Wonder and question emerged. Though I cannot prove it, I believe now that our spirits somehow met together as we both slept.

In my life, various experiences and a deep desire to know truth led me to research ancient and modern philosophy, science, the occult, and world religions. I questioned reality and existence to the borders of my reason and even the borders of insanity. Fortunately, I survived. Experiences produced wonder. Inquiry took me through all the steps of acquisition which ultimately gave me foundational purpose in life. I finally accepted that there is a God who created the universe and people; He is the Lord Jesus Christ! Though much of this is still a mystery, I now have a greater understanding of God's purposes with regard to people, and this ultimately has given me perspective on where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going.

The State of Truth:

If truth, according to the definition, is the real state of things, then something can be completely true, partially true, or not true. In the example of a formula we might assign complete truth to "A". If "A" and only "A" is completely true, then "A+B" is partially true, and "B+C" is not true at all. This is an oversimplification. Yet, my point is that what people believe and build their lives upon may be true, partially true, or not true at all. Ideas have consequences; hence, generations can possibly be influenced by "A+B" and "B+C" (partial or no truth). Now, let us consider this in light of spiritual illumination.

Spiritual Illumination:

There is no "A+B" (partially true) when it comes to the existence of an Eternal Creator God; He either exists or He does not. The atheist says there is no God. If the atheist is correct then experience, wonder, and purpose are superfluous, even as Jean Paul Sartre

thought. In some sense, it might be argued that if there is no Eternal Creator God then life becomes a lie, every breath of hope, every movement of faith, or every thought of love. It is true that individual atheists can have ethical standards, but the passion to support morality, justice, high ideals, or plan for future generations becomes tentative at best. Why care if there is no real lasting purpose?

Christians would certainly have a dilemma if there were no God and no afterlife. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and a future resurrection for all. The apostle Paul argued that if the resurrection were not true then our “faith is futile” (1st Cr. 15:16-17).

However, since there is no one who can disprove the existence of an Eternal Creator God, and since there are reasons to believe that He does exist, and furthermore, since it could be argued that there are benefits to the individual and society in believing this, it becomes quite practical to accept that He does exist and that He is interested in how we live our lives. This is part of spiritual illumination! The process of spiritual illumination opens up the spirit to believe that there is a high moral purpose for life and that each one has responsibility towards God and other people.

As people live their lives, there are moments of wonder that beg them to acquire truth. These moments of wonder can be at times almost ordinary but at other times extraordinary. For me the wonder of looking up into infinity or having the shared dream with my friend was extraordinary. So was falling in love with my wife, watching our children being born, etc. Even watching someone die can bring wonder. These significant moments are not easily ignored, but if the recipient of these wonderful moments does not seek to go deeper, to acquire the truth behind this sense of wonder, then the opportunity to examine these things from a perspective of wonder passes. Behavior patterns are formed. People who consistently refuse to consider the larger questions of life hinder the opportunity for spiritual illumination. This would even include those who are influenced by religion and ritual but who never seek to acquire truth on their own. Thus, their approach or lack of it to acquire the truth by exploring the larger questions, spurred on by moments of wonder, shape whether they will attain spiritual illumination or not.

Jesus Christ actually said that He came into the world “to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37), and referred to Himself as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Of course, there are many religions in the world that claim paths to spiritual illumination, and possibly all of them have some truth and morality. Certainly, all religions have problems as well, including Christianity. Yet, for Christians it is not so much about religion as it is about a personal, loving relationship with Jesus Christ who claims to be the truth. Consider some of the significant historical religious leaders: Buddha tried to seek an answer to why people suffer; Confucius tried to restore moral standards to China, and Muhammad promoted himself as a prophet above all others. Yet, none but Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God, gave His life for others, and then proved what He said by rising from the dead. This is the great truth which spawns hope. The celebration of His resurrection is at the heart of Christianity because it gives hope to millions of people that there is a future life after this one, and that God is concerned about how we live and what we believe. Indeed, the bible

says that God desires “truth in the inward parts” (Psalm 51:6).

The authentic Christian believes that God is interested in having a personal spiritual relationship, like a father to a son or a daughter. This deep conviction impacts the Christian’s thinking and life choices, and when enough people have this common worldview it transforms societies. For example, the earliest Christians did not conquer the Greco-Roman Empire by physical swords and spears; they changed society through a deep, passionate love for the Lord Jesus Christ and their fellow man. One aspect of their love for Jesus was the high moral conduct of Christians; this contrasted starkly against the debauchery of the Greco-Roman religious system of temple prostitutes, money-making schemes, and idolatry. Early Christianity’s idea of truth changed the lives of individuals and even the Greco-Roman Empire! The truth of it can still change lives today!

Conclusion

The subject of truth is simple yet complex. In this paper, I have considered the stages or modes of experience, wonder, and purpose, and how one’s approach to acquire truth impacts spiritual illumination. At some level, truth is important to all people. In closing, here is an amazing thought: If all people in all places began speaking nothing but the truth and seeking nothing but the truth, the world would change instantly and forever.⁹

⁹ See Gatebreakers.com website

Strategies to Help

PRAYER, LOVE, AND WITNESS

1. A combination of prayer, love, and witness is the most effective manner of bringing the truth to others and producing a transformation in their lives. Of course, people can resist you and they can resist the leading of the Holy Spirit. They must freely choose to follow Christ or not. However, it is important for Christians to understand that there is spiritual power in prayers, the expression of Christ's love to those who are without Him, and the truth that is exposed to them when there is a witness about Christ.
2. Matthew 16:18 [The Lord Jesus said] "I will build My Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."
3. The three keys to setting others free for the Lord:
 - a. Prayer: A Christian who develops an attitude of prayer for those in the bondage of cults and false world religions will position himself / herself to see people set free. Prayer can be individual, corporate, silent, or verbal. It can be prayer of spiritual warfare, intercession, or supplication. It can be a spontaneous prayer while driving by a Mormon temple, Kingdom Hall, etc. or a strategic prayer in a group setting. Let's believe God for breaking down the gates that hold these people in captivity.
 - b. Love: A Christian who develops a heart of love for those in the bondage of cults and false world religions will position himself / herself to see people set free. Christ died for these people. The followers of Christ should show Christ's love and compassion. Acts of kindness and words of Agape love may cause hard, resistant hearts to soften for the gospel seed.
 - c. Witness: A Christians who develops his or her ability to share the Gospel with those in the bondage of cults and world religions will position himself / herself to see people set free. A Christian can plant the message of the Gospel, water what others have sown, or even reap a harvest of souls for the Kingdom of God.

INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES

1. Evangelism Concepts:

- a. “He who wins souls is wise” – Proverbs 11:30
- b. Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where he found the bread.¹⁴
– D. T. Niles
- c. The word *evangelism* is *ev-angel-ism*, the prefix *ev* meaning good, and the word *angel* meaning messenger. So the word literally means *good-message-izing*.¹⁵ But how we share the good message is individual and often unique. The Lord did not create clones but individuals. Our temperaments help determine our approach to our manner of witness. Francis of Assisi taught that sometimes the gospel is preached through our actions and walk and not necessarily our words. Others find ways of humbly proclaiming their faith by words in their various occupations. One elevator operator in a Nashville hospital was heard to say, “I’m just a nobody telling everybody about somebody who can save anybody.”¹⁶
- d. Learning to have empathy for others: “If you would sell John Smith what John Smith buys, you must see John Smith through John Smith’s eyes.” – Old proverb among sales representatives

2. Individual Styles:

- a. One evangelist tells Christians to find their style of witnessing by noting the different styles used by various biblical characters based upon personality, temperament, talents, and background:
 - Confrontational approach: Peter was bold, direct, and to the point.
 - Intellectual approach: Paul was well educated. He could be confrontational, but he could also reason from Scripture, explaining and proving Jesus Christ.

14 Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, & Quotes* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 777.

15 Ibid, 778.

16 Ibid, 777.

- Testimonial approach: The blind man in John 9 didn't know a great deal about theology but he could say, "One thing I know: I once was blind and now I see."
- Invitational approach: The Samaritan woman left her water jug at the well and invited her friends to come and hear a man "who taught me everything I ever did."
- Interpersonal approach: Matthew put on a banquet (Luke 5:29) for his tax-collecting friends in an effort to expose them to Jesus. (Friendship evangelism)
- Service approach: Dorcas witnessed by serving others in Jesus' name, making clothes for the needy and poor (Acts 9).¹⁷

LONG TERM THINKING

1. Cults and non-Christian religions have *not* become entrenched in societies overnight, but through decades and centuries. Countries are not won to Christianity in a moment of time, but through generational outreach that gradually brings renewal and Christianizes culture.
2. Long-term relationships with non-Christians often provide a basis for them to examine your life's fruit and then opportunity for witness. R. A. Torrey once said, "I waited and watched fifteen long years to get my chance to speak with one man. Never a day passed in all those fifteen years that I did not speak to God about that man. At last my chance came, and it was my privilege to lead him to Christ."
3. Commitment to Persistent Prayer:
 - a. "We read that His disciples came to Him, and said, "Lord, teach us to pray." It is not recorded that He taught them how to preach. I have often said that I would rather know how to pray like Daniel than to preach like Gabriel. If you get love into your soul, so that the grace of God may come down in answer to prayer, there will be no trouble about reaching the people. It is not by eloquent sermons that perishing souls are going to be reached; we need

¹⁷ Mark Mittelberg, "Discover Your Evangelism Style," *Discipleship Journal*, Issue 95 (September / October 1996).

the power of God in order that the blessing may come down.”¹⁸ - D. L. Moody

- b. “Perseverance counts much with God as well as with man. If Elijah had ceased at his first petition the heavens would have scarcely yielded their rain to his feeble praying. If Jacob had quit praying at a decent bedtime he would scarcely have survived the next day’s meeting with Esau. If the Syrophenician woman had allowed her faith to faint by silence, humiliation, repulse, or stop mid-way its struggles, her grief-stricken home would never have been brightened by the healing of her daughter. Pray and never faint, is the motto Christ gives us for praying. It is the test of our faith, and the severer the trial and the longer the waiting, the more glorious the results.”¹⁹ – E. M. Bounds

LEADING SOMEONE TO THE LORD

Leading someone to the Lord is one of the most exciting privileges we have as Christians. However, once a person comes to that point of wanting to accept Jesus, what then? How do you lead someone to the Lord? Since salvation is something that happens in the heart between the believer and Jesus, there are no certain rules regarding method. Yet, there are principles found within various Scriptures that can help you lead the seeker to the Lord. Below is a format for leading someone to the Lord that incorporates two questions and ten steps. The steps have various Scriptures that can be used to show them the concept in the Word of God. Once they accept the Lord, there are follow up suggestions:

USE THE TWO-QUESTION TEST.

1. Ask, "Have you come to a place in your life where you know for sure that if you died tonight you would go to heaven?"

This establishes whether they believe in heaven and where they think they might go when they die. It does not necessarily establish whether they believe in hell, however.

2. Ask, "Suppose you died tonight and stood before God and He asked you why He should let you into His Heaven - what would you say?"

¹⁸ D. L. Moody, *Prevailing Prayer: What hinders it* (Chicago, IL: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1885), 12-13.

¹⁹ E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920), 60.

This establishes why they think they will spend eternity with God. They normally respond with a works type of answer such as, "I go to church," or "I obey the commandments," or "I was baptized as a baby," or "I do good deeds," or "I'm a good person," etc. If their answer is anything other than that they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior because He died for their sins, has forgiven them, and now lives in their heart by faith, then they are probably not yet born again, or they have not properly understood that they cannot work their way to heaven. Go through the ten steps focusing on the fact that works and goodness do not pay our way into heaven.

FOLLOW THESE TEN STEPS OF EXPLANATION.

1. In God's eyes all have sinned and are far from His glorious presence.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

2. This sin can potentially separate us from God forever.

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God." Isaiah 59:2

3. The final outcome of sin is eternal death and separation from God.

"For the wages of sin is death . . ." Romans 6:23

4. God's wrath is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of sin.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness . . ."
Romans 1:18

5. However, God does not want men to perish, but He wants all to be saved.

"[God] who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4

"[God is] not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

6. He sent His Son to pay the penalty for our sins.

"[Jesus] who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having

died to sins, might live for righteousness --- by whose stripes we are healed. For you were once like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." 1 Peter 2:24-25

7. The Gospel is this: 1) Jesus died on the cross for our sins, 2) Jesus was buried, and, 3) Jesus rose from the dead on the third day victorious over death.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you --- unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

8. God gives everyone the choice to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and through Him receive the gift of eternal life, or to reject Jesus and to remain under the wrath of God headed for eternal death.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 3:36

"The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

9. For those seeking salvation, God requires: 1) *Repentance* - a turning away from sins, unbelief, and dead works, to Jesus Christ, and 2) *Faith* in the substitutionary atonement of Christ alone. It is what He did for us on the cross that counts. We cannot be good enough nor do enough works to deserve salvation and eternal life.

"God . . . now commands all men everywhere to repent." Acts 17:30

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

10. Prayer for salvation: It comes through confession and belief. Lead them in it.

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10:9-10

The person asking the Lord for salvation should pray. Below is a possible prayer to lead them

through unless they want to make up their own words. Often, people don't know how to pray and so it would help if you ask them to follow along with you in prayer. Tell them that prayer is communication with God. As they follow along, they should direct their prayer to God. Pray these words and ask them to follow:

"Dear Heavenly Father, I am sorry for my sin and unbelief. Please forgive me. I thank you for sending your Son to die for me on the cross at Calvary. Lord Jesus, I accept your sacrifice on behalf of my sins. I accept the atonement of your blood that cleanses all my sins and creates in me a clean heart. I place my complete trust and faith in you for salvation. I know that I can't work my way to heaven or that I am not good enough. Jesus, I want to know you as my Lord and Savior. I need your help and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Your plan is for me to live for God and to spend eternity with you. Please come into my life and give me life everlasting. I want to be with you from this moment on and forever. Thank you for saving me from a path that leads to death and destruction. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for seeking me. Thank you for finding me. I accept your gift of salvation. I ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

Take time afterwards and do a Bible study on the Book of Life. Let them know that their name is now written in the Lamb's Book of Life: Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 20:15, 21:27; Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28; Luke 10:20.

HELP THEM GET ESTABLISHED IN THEIR NEW CHRISTIAN LIFE:

1. Developing a habit of daily prayer
 2. Developing a habit of reading the Bible
 3. Finding a good Christ-centered and Bible-centered home church
 4. Learning to fellowship with other Christians
 5. Taking steps to get baptized
 6. Growing in the Holy Spirit
 7. Learning to share their faith in Christ with others
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