



What to Say to Jehovah's Witnesses ... Ch.4 Conclusion & Application

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Chapter 4 Conclusion & Application

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Jehovah's Witnesses are very sincere about their beliefs and well versed in them. When they come to your door, invite them in. Be cordial and patient. Remember Peter's instruction: *"but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence"* (1 Peter 3:15). Unfortunately, most of the Christians who JW's encounter are unprepared and become extremely defensive and unpleasant with them. This just encourages the Witnesses to believe they are on the correct path. Why would they change unless someone soundly shows them their error? That someone may be *you!* Dare to be different by having a response, which is both biblically sound and loving.

It is easy to become upset with someone who disagrees with you on so important a subject. A few years ago, I blew it with a JW who knocked on my door. She was going around the neighborhood with her teenage daughter and I invited them in. We discussed the deity of Christ. It turned into a heated discussion and I eventually asked her to leave. Although she initially became quite unpleasant when I let her know that I disagreed with her on the issue, my attitude was bad to begin with. I was more excited about *"winning an argument"* than compassionately sharing the truth and patiently attempting to reveal Watchtower error. I thank my wife, Debbie,

who pointed out my attitude problem to me. Do we listen with an open mind when someone angrily or arrogantly tells us that we are wrong? We shut off our minds to whatever that person tells us. JW's are people too! If your attitude is bad, they will shut off their minds as well. You will get nowhere and mistakenly blame their unreceptiveness on their disinterest in truth.

Remember that it is the Watchtower that has led its followers down the wrong path. Lead them to the right path. These are sincere and committed people, just the kind you want in your church! When you begin talking with them, limit your conversation to the question, *"Who is Jesus?"* This is the most important difference between their beliefs and historical Christianity. You may say something like this: *"I admire you for being so diligent about your beliefs. However, we disagree on a major point, the deity of Christ, and I would like to discuss this with you."* They will agree without hesitation.

Tell them you would like to hear their reasons for believing Jesus is a creation of God, then you would like their responses to your reasons for believing he is God. Then dialogue with them. When everything has been said and done, you can tell them that they have not provided any good reasons for believing Jesus was created and that you have provided five reasons why he is God, one which even exposes some inconsistencies in their own translation of the Bible.

Watch out for detours. JW's may try to answer arguments for the deity that you never raised. This can create an illusion that you stand corrected on the deity issue. For example, once I was having a discussion with the JW's who had come to my home. I asked them for Scriptures which in their opinion indicated that Jesus was created. They cited Colossians 1:15. I showed them that the word *"firstborn"* could not possibly mean *"first created"* in this passage. They responded that earlier in the same verse it says that Jesus is *"the image of God,"* and since the Bible also says that we have been created in God's image I could not interpret the statement that Jesus is *"the image of God"* to indicate that he is God. I could have said, *"Hmm. You're right."* A series of those and I may end up attending their Bible study group because they answered all of

my questions. However, it was not my questions that they answered, but theirs! I actually responded, *“I did not say that the verse calls Jesus, God, only that it does not say that he was created as you initially indicated.”*

When they perceive the conversation is not going their way, they may try to detour you into other issues such as the earthly kingdom of Christ. Insist that you stay on the issue of who Jesus is, because its importance is far greater than whether eternity is spent in heaven or on a heavenly earth ruled by Christ. Belief in these other issues will not determine where one spends eternity. Where one stands on who Jesus is, however, may.[1]

Your efforts can prove to be fruitful. You may be surprised at how God may work. Several years ago while visiting my wife’s family in Nebraska, I was asked by one of her aunts to talk with her daughter who was a JW. I agreed and I scheduled a time to go over to her home. My wife and I had a cordial conversation with her and her husband. We left and didn’t hear anything else. Four years later when my wife went out to visit her family she talked with her aunt who told her that her daughter had left the Jehovah’s Witnesses as a result of our conversation four years prior and both she and her husband are now committed Christians who are active in their Baptist Church.

Another time two JWs came to my home on a Saturday morning. I usually invite them in. But this particular time I couldn’t because my son was just getting over a stomach virus he had endured the day before. I explained he was fine now, but I didn’t want to possibly expose them to getting the virus. I suggested we drive up to the Hardee’s a few blocks away and talk there over a cup of coffee. They agreed.

We sat down at a table and began to talk. I told them that I admired them for zealously proclaiming their beliefs to anyone who would listen and that I wished more people at my church were like that. They were appreciative of the comment. I then said, *“I find that we disagree on several issues, particularly one which is very important to both of us, the deity of Christ. You believe God created Jesus. I believe that he is God. So I would like to discuss this issue with*

you.” They agreed. I continued, *“Now I must admit, I don’t know all the answers and I suppose I am wrong on some things. Certainly no one is 100% correct. We do our best. So why don’t you show me why you believe Jesus was created and I’ll respond to that. Then I’ll show you why I believe Jesus is God and I’d like to hear your responses.”* Nothing opens a cordial dialogue better than admitting you could be wrong. This will encourage open-mindedness on their part as well. This is far different from the grumpy response of many Christians who gruffly say, *“I’m not interested!”* and then slam the door on them. Remember Peter’s admonition to defend the faith *“with gentleness and reverence.”* Another great reference which was cited earlier is 2 Timothy 2:24-26:

And the Lord’s bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (NASB)

Our conversation went well. I listened with great interest and patience as they presented their case. Their Bible texts were virtually a mirror reflection of those presented in Chapter 8. One by one, as I answered their arguments, they would simply go on to their next text, *“Well, what about this one?”* Our discussion continued to be cordial. I began my case for the deity of Christ. They had no answers at all to a few of the texts. The others elicited the anticipated responses discussed in the previous chapter. I answered them as well.

The remarkable thing about this conversation was that about thirty minutes into it a stranger walked up to us, politely apologized for interrupting and said, *“I’ve been overhearing your conversation. Would you mind if I sat in and listened?”* We invited him to join us. He listened attentively for a good forty-five minutes, injecting a comment here and there. Approximately fifteen minutes after he had joined us, I noticed two others trying their best to listen in without appearing obvious. One was an employee on break. When he saw that I noticed them listening, he looked somewhat embarrassed and said, *“Can we listen too?”* We now had three strangers listening. After about another fifteen minutes, the employee stood up and said, *“My break is over. Thanks for allowing*

me to sit in. I learned a lot!" Then he looked right at me and asked, "Would you pray for me?" I said I'd be happy to. Then he walked away. Shortly after, our first stranger thanked us and left.

The JWs and I continued to talk a little longer. In summing up, I said:

"We've talked a while (3 hours and 15 minutes!) and here's how I see our conversation. You haven't provided a single good reason from Scripture why I should believe Jesus was created. On the other hand, I have provided several texts that strongly indicate Jesus is God. You have been unable to provide a plausible alternative explanation for these texts.

"I appreciate your zeal and recognize your sincerity about your beliefs. I hope you appreciate mine as well. It's unfortunate that one of us is wrong. The apostle Paul and Nicodemus were very sincere about their Jewish beliefs. When they were faced with the truth, however, they inquired further and changed, even though it cost them their fortunes, their status, and in Paul's case his life. The deity issue is worth an independent investigation on your part, isn't it?" They nodded in agreement. "I encourage you to consult scholarly works outside of the Watchtower. Think through this on your own. If you come to see the Scriptures teach that Jesus is part of the Godhead, it will cost you as well because your Kingdom Hall will not tolerate it. I pray you will have the courage of Paul and Nicodemus and make that change."

Your knowledge may overwhelm some JWs, because some of the information you now have is technical. I once had a JW tell me that there was no way for her to get into the languages as I could, so she could never know if what I said was correct. She also said that God is not the author of confusion and that we should be able to read our English translations and understand his Word. These are valid points. Maybe some readers are feeling as she did. So let's spend a moment with each of her points.

1. "I don't know the languages. So I can't know what's right."

You may not desire to invest the time to learn Greek and Hebrew. However, you do have the same sources available to you for word studies

that scholars use. Although your local library probably will not carry these books on their shelves, you can obtain them by using inter-library loan. Your local library will borrow the book(s) from another library. You may have to pay a small fee for the service. If there is a seminary or Bible college nearby, you will probably be able to locate them there. Your local bookstore will also be happy to sell them to you. (They are a worthwhile investment if you enjoy in-depth Bible study.) For New Testament Greek words, a few good sources are Gerhard Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 volumes). This is the most exhaustive source available. Colin Brown's *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (4 volumes), is also a great source and is much more friendly to the non-Greek reader. The fourth volume of this work is an index which keys the Greek words to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible* (a book most Bible students have). Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich's *A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* is a good source, but not at all friendly to the non-Greek reader. If you want to see how a Greek word is used throughout the New Testament, Wigram and Winter have a *Word Study Concordance*. They will list the Greek word and then every verse where it appears. For Old Testament Hebrew words, a great source is Willem VanGemeren's *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (5 volumes). Like its New Testament sister, the fifth volume is an index which keys the Hebrew words to Strong's in order to make it easy for the non-Hebrew reader to find. Harris, Archer, Waltke have produced the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (2 volumes). This is an excellent source and is friendly to the non-Hebrew reader since it is likewise keyed to Strong's.

Finally, when you study the Bible in-depth, a simple system will be of great help:

a. Study the word. First look up the definition in one of the references listed above to see how it is used throughout the ancient world.

b. Study the verse. Now that you know the meaning(s) of the word, what is the verse saying?

c. Study the chapter. Now that you have a good idea of what the verse is saying, how does it fit in the overall chapter or context? Sometimes a verse may have a few different possible

meanings. Many times the context will allow you to determine its correct meaning.

d. Study the Bible. As we saw in Revelation 3:14, sometimes the chapter doesn't tell you what the author is saying about a particular verse or word. In times like this, look to see if the same author touches on the subject in other parts of his writings. For example, the author of Revelation, John, has much to say about the deity of Christ (John 1:1; 20:28; 1 John 5:20; Revelation 22:6, 16; Alpha and Omega, First and Last, Beginning and End passages). John's writings indicate he believed Jesus was God. In light of these teachings, an interpretation of Revelation 3:14 saying God created Jesus is unwarranted.

2. "God is not the author of confusion. We should be able to read our English Bible and understand it." I agree. God is not the author of confusion, man and Satan are. What do you do when confusion exists between opposing views? You can retreat by saying, *"My pastor (church leaders, denomination) believes it, so it must be true."* This is fine if your pastor is right. But what if he isn't? It may be helpful to bring them back to your least technical points such as Watchtower misinterpretations of certain verses outlined in Chapter 8. For example, ask them: *"What do you think of the Watchtower's interpretation of Proverbs 8:22 now?"* Many times they will say, *"I'm not sure."* Take them through the context, chapter, and book again. Then ask, *"Given Solomon's purpose in writing Proverbs, his style of writing, and what he is saying in Chapters 7-9, what do you personally think he means by wisdom? – and why?"* Make them think. Put yourself in their place. What would you be thinking if someone showed you something that seriously challenged your beliefs? Invite them to go home and look at the issue with an open mind and come back next week to discuss it again.

Finally, remember that your only responsibility is to plant the seed. It is the Holy Spirit who works the change (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). The purpose of your discussions with the Jehovah's Witnesses should be to reveal the truth with love, patience, and compassion. That is the role, which God has given every Christian (2 Timothy 2:24-26; 1 Peter 3:15-16). The person who does not care about the truth will not change. The person who does care about it will think about what you have to say and engage in further study. But ultimately it is the

Holy Spirit who brings a person to the truth.

We have come to the end of our study on how to answer Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. If you are a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness, I pray you will prayerfully consider what has been discussed. Run the information by the leaders of your Ward or Kingdom Hall. Get their response and think through it. Ask yourself, *"Did they really answer my questions?"* It's your own soul and no one else's. Don't let someone else's error cost them their soul *and yours*. Eternity is a long time to feel regret. Have the courage of Paul and Nicodemus! Remember, you never have to be afraid of the truth.

If you are *not* a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness, I hope this book has been helpful. Master the information, make sure your attitude is pure, and go for it! I am proud of you for choosing this book and I wish you God's best!

[Go to Appendix 1 - More on John 1:1]

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References:

[1] When cornered, JW's may likewise reply that they are not interested in debate. You may reply *"I'm not either. But when it comes to something as important as the eternal destiny of our soul, important questions must be asked and answered."*

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