

Dealing With Cults

'See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.'

(Colossians 2:8)

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Introduction

In this short book I work in reverse order. I begin by sharing where I'm at now in dealing with cults, and then I work back to explain how I got to this place over the years.

I share some personal experiences and key Scriptures, which have helped me grow in this area and find a footing in dealing with cults.

I focus mainly on the core and common error of them all, i.e. denying the true identity of Jesus, and therefore the true message of the gospel. (2 Corinthians 11:4)

This is because the true identity of Jesus is what is denied in all cults (*and generally other religions, e.g. Islam and Hinduism*), and it is the point where roads diverge from the true Christian faith, and a cult is born.

Let me define a cult very simply here: Any offshoot of Christianity that denies the identity of Jesus, and adds that you need to belong to their organization to be saved by God. We'll look at this in more detail.

So this book is about dealing with cults on the street, so to speak, or on your front door. It is not a study about what different cults believe in detail – because that is not really necessary in dealing with most of them, most of the time. Yes, in-depth learning is important for some believers,

but not for most in general witness or outreach.

If you are interested in more detailed learning about specific cults and their teachings, I recommend work by Charlie Campbell:
www.alwaysbeready.com

OK, let's dive in...

1. **This Morning on the Street**

I share verse cards (my version of a tract) as a tool for evangelism.¹ The majority of the time I'm just sharing these as I go, like when I buy a coffee, I will offer the cashier one, *'Can I give you this, a couple of verses that might encourage you?'*

Sometimes, however, I do a concerted 'outreach', for example earlier this morning. I had on my heart to go to a certain part of the city center, and to just stand at a street corner and share my verse cards to passers-by for a couple hours.

I prayed the Lord would lead me to a particular place. I felt him call to my mind a certain corner of a certain street. So there I went.

When I got there, about 10am, it wasn't as busy as I would have liked, and I was wondering if I should move to another spot. I felt the Lord say no. I mean, people were passing me by, some accepting the card, some rejecting it, but just not the steady flow of traffic I like. But the Lord said to stay here. He had purposes here. So I stayed.

I noticed across the street, basically at the opposite corner, were 2 Jehovah Witnesses with their pop-up book stall. I realized also that it

¹ For more on my outreach resources, see:
www.sharingyourfaith.weebly.com

must have been an outreach day/time for them, because I noticed another 15-20 of them over the next 2 hours circling the park, switching out shifts at the book stand.

Up the other end of the street, one block from me, was a permanent store front for Scientology. So I was basically in the middle of these 2 cults. Both offshoots of Christianity.

It unnerved me. It always kinda does. So while sharing verse cards, I began reflecting on my own sense of stress here between these groups, my insecurity. Let me share some of the dynamics, and how they resolved in my heart and mind.

I started to think about what it is *they* believe, I believe, and how I could confront their error, and prove it wrong. That's a lot of tension, a lot of pressure! But it is what I feel 'tempted' to do in these situations.

I started to think through that key difference with them – i.e. that Jesus is God.

You see, they deny this. They get very close to it in words, but they deny it to the core. So JWs don't worship Jesus. They only worship God the Father, and claim Jesus is the Son. They honor Jesus (except it's not the true Jesus), and they talk about believing in him for salvation (but it's not his true identity), and then they focus on

'Jehovah God' (but not the real one¹), and basically how the JWs are the only true religion and if you're not part of it you have no hope.

It's messy. It's subtle. They use the same language and a lot of the same verses, but they are using them incorrectly, and ultimately to point away from Jesus, not to him.

They believe Jesus is separate from God the Father, but they will refer to him as a god – yes, 'a' god. As in, one of many lesser deities, and 'god' with a little 'g'.²

They have rewritten John 1:1 to protect this divergence. Instead of the correct Greek translation saying, '***In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God***', they say, '*... the Word was a god.*'

(They have their own translation of the Bible called, 'The New World Translation', in which they have changed many little details to defend their own theologies, rather than accurately translate the original texts with integrity)

They study JW.org not the Bible. The Bible is a distant second to the religion.

¹ 'Jesus said, 'If God were your Father, you would love me...' (John 8:42)

² They will point you to John 10:34/Psalm 82:6, and some other verses, to defend that 'other gods' theory.

The hair on my neck bristles when I come across this deception, and people pushing it. I want to conflict. I want to argue the deity of Jesus, and argue, and argue and prove to them...

Here's the trap! Here I have fallen into their trap a number of times. Proof and answers and what makes sense. They have stepped away from the actual '*revelation*' of Scripture about who Jesus is, and they debate what 'makes sense' and what doesn't, etc.

Honestly, they are *not* making sense, because the whole narrative about God is higher than 'sense' and reason. Our reason fits into the paradigm of God's created world and systems; God does not fit into – though he harmonizes with – the systems he's created. This is why God tells us that is impossible through our wisdom to find God. He also tells us that this was the key error of the Greeks who would consider the message of Christ as 'foolishness' – because they idolized wisdom - not *true* wisdom, but their own little wisdom. (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

So when I come across a cult with lots of 'answers' and 'arguments', I am tempted to lower myself to that level of debate. But we stand on grace and revelation, not reason and debate. If I do engage a conversation with a JW or Mormon, I need to heed the Spirit's lead and words, not the terms of the debate that *they* put on the table. Jesus never answered on that level. And he never let people set the terms of

his revelation and truth. He would answer according to the Spirit, and answer on his own terms of revelation and authority. (*Look carefully at the dialogue between Jesus and the devil in Matthew 4:1-11, noting the questions put to Jesus, but how he actually answered.*)

So I am stationed at this corner handing out verse cards, about twenty-five meters away are JW's representing their religion. I want to go over there and strike up conversation. They are not coming to me, so there is no need to do this, but I am tempted to do this. But I don't. Let me explain why.

Jesus said, '**All those the Father gives to me come to me, and all those who come to me I will not turn away.**' (John 6:37)

Crossing my paths at this street corner I felt led to are some people who are open. Some accept my offer of a verse card. One or two have even stopped and discussed with open heart and mind, and one or two have even asked for prayer.

If I now cross the street to argue with the JW's, well, there on the corner that God sent *me* to, at *that* door post, I will not be any longer. I will have left my post. That gap God called me to, I will not be in. Broken people would be walking by, while I'm across the street in a futile argument or even a polite 'discussion'. But the truth is I would be out of the battle here. I would be distracted and

neutralized.

‘See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.’

(Colossians 2:8)

A couple things to note here. When JW's and Mormons and others are out doing their thing, they are in the mode of arguing that they are right and you are wrong. They want this discussion. It is not honest reasoning and inquiry. They are not seeking truth. They have closed their minds to anything other than their agenda. So if you engage them during their time of outreach, you walk into a 2-dimension type of engagement. You say something, they say, *‘But but...’* and then you find yourself saying, *‘But but...’* and meanwhile, over where God had called you to stand and share the ‘revelation’ of Jesus (not debates and wisdom of man), people are just walking by, unreached.

Jesus did not follow the Pharisees around to argue with them when they were working. They, however, were a little insecure and followed *him* around, and would ask some questions and chime in... This is different. If the Lord prompts people off *their* corner, and they feel pulled to come chat for a little while, I think that is different, and God will give wisdom for answers. (Luke 21:14-15) But I’m not going to step away

from my doorpost and step into their distraction and trap.

I feel a little the same, for example, about 'verse-carding' outside a Hindu temple or something. I feel that once people are in 'their place' of worship, do unto to others as you would have them do to you and yours. (Matthew 7:12) I would not appreciate Muslim missionaries – which are out there – to be sharing literature outside our church on a Sunday morning. So I no longer do outreach where people are practising their religion. I feel it just sets up a sense of 'opposition' rather than 'invitation'.

I have learned (the hard way) to extend this principle to my outreach to the 'wayward', so to speak. I don't do ministry after dark, typically, or outside clubs or parties or red-light districts. Not because I fear the environments or feel they are compromising, but because I feel it is not the time or place for meaningful engagement. I have talked to people about God in the party zone, particularly when I was a new believer and I found myself in some of these places at school age. It never was fruitful. Even people who expressed real interest (while under the influence of alcohol), almost pulled further away from me and the message when they subsequently encountered me in the light of day, sober and sound of mind.

So what I do now is try to determine my own agenda in outreach – going places and at times

that I feel led to go. And when I'm finished, I pack up and head home. What people choose to do after that is on them and their time. This way people don't feel 'targeted', either. I encounter them 'randomly' on a street corner, or going door-to-door. I hope and pray to meet people before or after they choose roads and places they should not. I'm hoping to decrease attendance at compromised places, by encountering people before they go to those places.

I hope to give a card to a Mormon when they are not on the bicycle or wearing their badge, and a JW when they are not on my door. I hope to give a gang member a card when he is passing through a gas station, or a prostitute a card when she is coming out of the grocery store. I hope they go home and consider the message, the love, the call of Jesus on their life and choices.

I remember when I was an early believer and I engaged a couple Mormons on my door. They asked me to do a Bible study with me. I agreed. They showed up on the day agreed, and we proceeded. I realized that they were not hearing anything I had to say, really. They had an agenda. They ended up just saying that, *'What we really hope is that you will pray with us and...'* It was awkward, messy, and I learned from this.

I don't agree to the terms or invitations of cults and other religions, thinking it will give me

opportunity. These invites have come about by *them* being out on the beat and they have an agenda. They are not inviting me to something with an openness to also hear what I have to say. I need to ask the '*Lord of the Harvest*' where he would have *me* go work – share the 'revelation' of Jesus Christ – and do that. I need to create an agenda of my own, be on the offensive.

So out there on the street corner, I could see the JWs, as quite a large group this morning, looking over at me. Three things I noticed in a split second.

1. Drawing In vs. Reaching Out:

The JWs were trying to draw people, have people come over to them and enquire about their book stand. Whereas I was giving something out freely, stepping up to people – *homeless, well-dressed, all types* – offering something to take away. I had no need for further conversation on my part, unless people sought it, and no need for people to know my church affiliation. Just the simple 'gospel' to take home, to consider, apart from me.

2. God's Favor:

I noticed that the Lord was bringing me many people, and many were taking my card, whereas in the 2 hours I was there I did not notice one person speaking to the JWs at their book stand.

Every now and then a group of other JW's would stand around and they would talk together, but I did not see one encounter with a seeker.

3. God's Word to Me:

I remembered that early that morning I had read Matthew 14. It was not on my 'reading plan', but it was open before me, and I felt before I came out that I should read that chapter. The chapter ends with a very powerful passage (as far as JW's are concerned) where Jesus walks on water and the disciples then '**worship**' him. (vs. 33) I have used this Scripture many times in sincere conversations with JW's. You see, they do not worship Jesus, because you can only worship the one true God – and they don't see Jesus as the one true God. I raise this verse with them, sometimes, which reveals that Jesus was worshipped – and yes, we can only worship the one true God. Jesus himself said it in Luke 4:8, quoting Deuteronomy 6:13. This is only possible if in that mysterious, deep and 'revealed' way, Jesus is one with the one true God.

Jesus had led me to this passage early this morning, in preparation for this positioning on the streets near the 'false'. It was a timely reminder – not to go speak with them – but that their doctrine *is* based on 'philosophy', man's reasoning, rather than on the true 'revelation' of God through his Word, and that I was to have confidence in my message as I stood on that corner.

Another significant thing happened this morning that I felt was of the Lord to establish me. One guy, Sean, stopped to talk to me. He was one of the very first people I encountered. We had a very brief chat, but I think the Lord brought it to me at the outset of my time more for me than for him, to establish and anchor me at my post.

Sean told me he was trying to find the true way in his faith in God, as his dad and brother had fallen away. He said he was looking to God rather than believing in church. Then he said, *‘Every day I see the JW’s over there, and up the street there is the Scientology store...’*

I said, *‘Sean, this is the challenge! We can get distracted with what people and organizations are saying about Jesus, and fail to really consider what he said about himself, and what he called us to. You need to block out the voices of them and them, and even me! I would really encourage you to take some time and read the short book referenced on that card, ‘Who is Jesus?’ That QR code will take you right to it.’¹*

Sean was grateful! He said, *‘I will definitely check it out and hit you up through the website!’* He thanked me sincerely and went on his way.

So I kept chipping away, smiling, and as people crossed my path I would offer the card and say, *‘Something to read later!’*

¹ This is the featured, free book at 1peter1three.weebly.com

When I got to the end of my time, and had not been approached by the JWs (but observed), I walked back to my car and drove home. I felt I had 'won', in that I had not been distracted or stepped away from my post. They had not been allowed by the Lord to cut across my work, either.

In this next section let me share with you how I *do* actually converse with JWs, Mormons, and others.

2. Speaking to a Cult Member

Remember: we partner with the Holy Spirit in our witnessing. We don't go it alone. We don't have to have the last word. We can't open eyes to the Lord. We testify to Jesus. We don't try to *prove* him or force him on people.

With this in mind, there is very little occasion for anger or intense debate. Sometimes there is occasion for this, even Jesus got heated sometimes.¹ But generally, outside of rare times of '*righteous indignation*', we are called to be gentle in our strength.

'In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.' (1 Peter 3:15)

I am still learning this and trying to grow in this. My natural disposition is 'defensive' in the context of spiritual confrontation. I have had to learn to harness my conviction, my zeal, to steer me and drive me in things I should be doing and places I should be going – rather than using that energy for 'spiritual debate'.

'When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no

¹ John 2:13-17; Matthew 23

threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.' (1 Peter 2:23)

I realized over the years that the 'common denominator' of cults (*those ones that look like Christianity but are not, e.g. Mormonism and Jehovah Witnesses*) is that they deny the deity of Jesus, and that their 'gospel message', so to speak, involves being a member of their organization. So here's what I've been doing over the last number of years...

Knock knock. I answer the door. They introduce themselves.

Me (with a smile, after they introduce themselves): *I'm actually a Christian, but maybe we can chat for just a couple minutes?*

Them: *Sure*

Me: *OK, I have a question for you, or maybe a small challenge. How about you tell me your message of Jesus and salvation for 3 minutes, or whatever time you need, and then I'll tell you what I believe the gospel of Jesus is. Does this sound good?*

Them: *Sure.*

Me: *OK, now part of this challenge is that I want you to tell me the message of Jesus, how I can be saved from my sin here and now, without mentioning your organization. I mean, Jesus had*

a message for everyone, and often promised complete salvation on the spot, right? So can you tell me the message of Jesus Christ, as if I'd never heard it before, so that I can be saved here and now – without mentioning your organization?

Them: *OK, well, OK... (2 minutes in they start mentioning their own special prophet and how they are the one true church...)*

Me (interrupting gently): *Now, we had agreed that you would not mention your organization. You see, Jesus often promised salvation – complete and unlimited – without there even being a church established. No baptism required. No membership required, such as John 3:16, John 5:24, and even Paul to the jailer in Acts 16:30-31.*

Them: *Ummmm (or possibly another feeble attempt to explain something, but again making specific reference to their organization...)*

Me: *OK, allow me my 2 or 3 minutes to explain what I believe the gospel is. Is that OK? We agreed that, right?*

Them: *Yes, go ahead.*

Me: *I believe the Bible is very clear from the start that there is one true God, maker of heaven and earth. Only one. There were amazing prophecies about God himself coming one day to save*

people, particularly Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, and Isaiah 53, and many more – such as Job’s own cry of the heart in Job 19:25-27. And then one day Jesus was born – ‘God with us.’ (Matthew 1:23 – referencing Isaiah 7:14) It was amazing, it was mysterious, it was God in the flesh. This is beyond our minds, but it was the clear ‘revelation’ – not ‘explanation’ – of God. For this reason John opens his writing with: **‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God...’** (John 1:1,14) and then in verse 14 John writes: **‘The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.’**

The Scriptures, my friends, are clear, start to finish, about there being only one true God, and Jesus being completely one with this God. It is everywhere! It is the clear revelation of the Scriptures.

Now this same Jesus came – God in the flesh – and he stretched out his hand to you, to me, and said if we took his hand, believed on him, he would forgive our sin and give us eternal life. He paid for our sin as the perfect and holy sacrifice, and said if we believed on him we would receive this salvation. I leave you with this one, famous verse:

‘Jesus said, ‘If you hear my words and believe him who sent me, you will have eternal life and will not be condemned. You have crossed over from death to life.’
(John 5:24)

So yes, there are some key Scriptures we need to know and have to hand about the true identity of Jesus, and the simple, complete promise of salvation. But that is really all. If we are crystal clear on what the truth is on this matter, the counterfeit shows itself at every turn.

We can keep coming back to the fact that Jesus did 'reveal' (not explain) that he is one with God, completely! (*John 1:1, 14; Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 7:14/Matthew 1:23; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15-20, etc.*) And he did offer full salvation for those who have eyes to see, and accept this revelation of Christ, repent of their sin and believe.

He is God, and turning to him sincerely we are saved. That's the undeniable revelation – consistent and coherent – from Genesis to Revelation.

We need to know these key truths about who Jesus is, his promise of salvation, and not allow the discussion to go beyond this. We stand on this, and we stay here. If there is no accord here, then we are not talking about the same Jesus.

Let me say this again: If we are not agreed on the mysterious, powerful, 'revealed' identity of Jesus, then we are not talking about the same Jesus in any other aspect of discussion. Zero point talking about any other points.

I have booklet, free in PDF and on the APP, and cost-price on Amazon, called, '**Who is Jesus?**' I wrote this book with cults and other religions in mind. At the back of this book are references for all points made about his identity. I recommend you learn at least 5 or 6 key Scriptures about the identity of Jesus, and 5 verses about the gospel message.

Another booklet is called, '**Verses to Learn: How & Why**' - also free and/or cost-price. It has a section in it about the deity of Jesus, and another about the gospel message. Please check out both these books, under the BOOKS tab at: 1peter1three.weebly.com

2. False Teachers vs. Cults

‘There will come a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine but will surround themselves with many teachers that teach them what their itching ears want to hear.’
(2 Timothy 4:3)

Cults are deceiving at the outset. They have twisted the true teaching of Scripture, and then on a false foundation built a structure, an organization. We are told that no other foundation other than Jesus can be laid. (1 Corinthians 3:11) We are told that he is the **‘chief cornerstone’**,¹ and this cornerstone is at times rejected, not put in its place. Where this happens, we have a ‘false religion’, or a cult, established.

Then we have situations – a lot of them – where the truth about Jesus is known, stated, but not lived. This is hypocrisy – and Jesus warned about hypocrisy in spiritual leaders from the get-go. (Luke 12:1; Matthew 23:1-4) This is different from a cult. This is in the category of a good foundation, but a poor build on top of the foundation. This is the realm of ‘false teachers’.

There is *not* practising what you preach, as noted in Matthew 23:3, but then there *is* practising what you should not, usually in the form of ‘sin’, like pornography or adultery or

¹ Ephesians 2:20 (Psalm 118:22; Luke 20:17-18)

dishonest gain.

‘They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.’ (Titus 1:16)

It is important for all of us to note, as authority and influence increase, the punishment also increases:

‘Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.’ (James 3:1)

Jesus also speaks of ‘measures’:

‘The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.’ (Luke 12:47-48)

False teachers, I believe, are ***‘lukewarm’***¹ Christians that are teaching to please their hearers (and tithers) and not God. There is a lot

¹ Jesus to the church in Laodicea: *‘Because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth.’* (Revelation 3:16)

of 'biblical' teaching that can be taught, but is not Spirit-led and challenging. Rather, it is what people are just demanding to hear. It may not be technically wrong, but in Spirit it may not be in keeping with the gospel.

The Spirit moves and leads and speaks. He **'calls to mind things taught by Christ'**, and **'teaches all things.'** (John 14:26) A person can even be quoting the Bible – as was the devil in Matthew 4:1-11 – but not heeding the lead of the Spirit, not communicating what the Spirit is calling to mind.

Paul rebuked Peter, not putting his finger on a particular 'sin' or breaking of a law, but rather on the grounds of this:

'... they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel...' (Galatians 2:14)

Paul was perceiving, discerning, that there was a drifting from the lead of the Spirit in Peter's actions (favoring one group of Christians over another). This was not Peter denying Jesus as Lord, or that his core doctrine was wrong. This was a man of God discerning that something in Peter's spirit was off, his motive, and this was manifesting in his actions. And Paul, full of Spirit, challenged him.

There are many *'false teachers'* now in Christian churches that have good doctrine. (see above verse, 2 Timothy 4:3) But their love has grown

cold. Solid doctrine – the written Word – is not the point. The written Word should lift a person's eyes off the page to the Living Word, Jesus Christ, and they should walk with him in Spirit and truth.

'God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.' (John 4:24)

To this one church in Ephesus, where there was solid doctrine but the love of God had waned, Jesus warned that he would remove their '**lampstand**', their church and therefore their influence.

'To the church in Ephesus write... I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.' (Revelation 2:1-5)

True teaching, and true teachers, are not just about what's in the Bible. They are also walking with the Holy Spirit. There is head knowledge, and there is 'love' of God. The point of the

knowledge, is to grow in love – which Jesus himself said was the most important command. (Matthew 22:36-40) We can know about Jesus – the Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic – and yet not come to him, not love him. Look what Jesus said to this religious group:

‘You search the Scriptures because in them you think you possess eternal life, but you refuse to come to me to have life.’

(John 5:39-40)

We are also warned by Jesus that there will be influential people speaking his name and even doing miracles, but they do not know him. So look past the detail, my brother, my sister, to the spirit you discern!

‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

(Matthew 7:21-23)

A false teacher in one sense is harder to discern than a cult. However, in another sense, it is easier to discern. A cult has false teaching at the core. If you put your finger on that, and hold it there, you are exposing something ‘literal’ that is

the problem. Now, with a false teacher it may come to ‘discernment’, not a wrong teaching. They may have good teaching on paper, but they are not **‘acting in line with the truth of the gospel’**¹ – or what you discern to be the teaching of the Holy Spirit for the season, or the ‘calling to the mind’ of teachings of Jesus. It may take more spiritual discernment than theology to ‘discern’ a false teacher.

Note: We are all called to **‘practice discernment’**, so do use your God-given discernment together with your study of the Bible. We are also called to **‘test prophecy’**, holding to the good – i.e. discarding what is not good.² One giveaway of a false teacher is their private life. If they are not walking the talk, then they should be avoided. Period.

‘I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people - not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.’

(1 Corinthians 5:9-11)

¹ Galatians 2:14

² Hebrews 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

Again – which I have not seen happen much – we have this instruction from Paul:

‘But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning. I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.’

(1 Timothy 5:20-21)

In fact, I have seen this ‘instruction’ concertedly avoided, in the name of ‘mercy’ and honor and kindness. That’s not the instruction.

Love of money can carry us off course – teachers and lay people alike. Paul writes to Timothy:

‘Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.’ (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

For the love of money – and ‘ego’ or pride – I’ve seen myself slide off course, and I’ve seen whole churches slide off course. It is no coincidence that Jesus said we could not serve God and money. In a way ‘money’ covers everything that is not God.

'No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.' (Matthew 6:24)

We will end this chapter by saying again: Identifying and even speaking with cult members, although stressful, is pretty straightforward. The heresy is clear. If we focus on the key identity of Jesus, and learn the teaching, hold to the teaching, the place of 'falseness' in a cult is clear.

False teachers – and indeed ***'false believers'*** (2 Corinthians 11:26) – is an ongoing challenge, and does not have one main road of error. We need to watch ourselves, and we need to watch – and encourage – our brothers and sisters in the Lord, to stay on the narrow path.

'Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.' (Colossians 3:16)

4. Other Religions vs. Cults

‘The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth... he gives everyone life and breath and everything else... he has set a day when he will judge the world by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.’

(Acts 17:24-31)

This passage above is Paul speaking to a people who did not know about the God of the Bible. He was making a simple proclamation of the true God, a broad description of him as Creator, Judge, and then refers to Jesus as having been raised from the dead. A broad outline. A sketch. A proclamation.

Look at how the people responded in this instance:

‘When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, ‘We want to hear you again on this subject.’ (vs.32)

Note, some ‘sneered’. Some were interested. This is a great cross-section of what we encounter when sharing about Jesus. Jesus said it would be this way, and also spoke these words of encouragement to us:

‘Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.’

(Luke 10:16)

When we walk with Jesus, and share Jesus, we are in a battle. People’s responses to you are not personal. It is between them and God. This does not make it easy, because people sometimes think and act like it is personal, so you may suffer for Christ in this way. But truly, deep down, it is not about you. You are the messenger. It is between them and God. One day you will vanish from the arena, your ‘ambassador’ role will end, and they will find themselves alone with the Lord on this issue.

‘For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...’ (2 Corinthians 5:10)

When we are dealing with cults – offshoots of Christianity – we defend the true teaching of the Scriptures about the revelation of who Jesus is. They have twisted the texts and teachings. We know what it really teaches, and we stand on that ‘revelation’ without moving.

However, when we speak to other religions, we begin by making a simple and clear declaration about the one true God and Jesus Christ. We ‘reveal’. We put on the table a story, as it were, they might never have heard. And our confidence is that this story flows from the Holy Spirit of God, and will resonate with their soul.

We pray they ask to know more. We pray the Holy Spirit also advocates alongside our testimony. (John 15:26-27)

We reveal. We unveil. If the name of Jesus, and his story of defeating death, paying for sin, walking the earth, touches their conscience, we continue to build on the revelation as the Spirit leads.

This is at the coalface of encounter. Sometimes with Muslims I have to simply state, with authority and kindly, what the truth is: *‘Jesus is more than a prophet. He is God in the form of man. He came to defeat death, pay for our sin, and he says he will judge all people.’*

I deposit with them this ‘revelation’ as a believer in Jesus. I simply stand with Jesus and testify to him. Some may sneer, some may be interested. But I stand and speak as an ‘ambassador’. This is the starting point with ‘other religions’, or people that do not know the message of Jesus.

‘We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.’ (2 Corinthians 5:20)

As we grow in Jesus we get lots of insights and experiences. And we are told to ‘grow’ in our learning, to ***‘add to our love knowledge and depth of insight.’*** (Philippians 1:9)

However, the deeper we go, the more humble and ready we should be, to simply stand with Jesus and share his 'revelation': *The Bible teaches that Jesus is Lord of all. I believe him. I want to share him with you.*'

It is tempting as we 'grow' in Jesus, to get distant from this childlike 'testimony'. Some pride gets in, and we want to look 'wise' to people, knowledgeable, prove things, quote things, etc. But we must always remember, and indeed 'admit', that some see and some don't see, while looking at the same Jesus. And our most basic, childlike testimony, like that of the healed blind man, is ***'Once I was blind, but now I see.'***¹

This humble, 'standing with Jesus', regardless of how someone may or may not respond (sneer or enquire), is the highest attainment of all spiritual growth.

'Let us go to him outside the camp and bear the disgrace he bore.' (Hebrews 13:13)

So what is our message to someone who has not heard it, or has grown up in another religion? Here is a simple outline, and the Scriptures would be good to learn by heart:

¹ John 9:1-25

'There is only one true God.' (Isaiah 45:5)

God became a man, Jesus Christ, so that he could save us from our sin. (see Matthew 1:21 and John 1:1,14)

Our sin – our choices to do bad things – separates us from God. (see Isaiah 59:2 and Romans 6:23)

Jesus died to pay for our sin, and then he rose again from the dead to offer us forgiveness and eternal life. (see 1 Peter 3:18 and John 3:16)

If you believe in Jesus as Lord, and ask him now to forgive your sins, he will save you. He will put his Spirit in you. You will be saved.
(see John 5:24; Ephesians 1:13)

Let's make it even simpler:

God who made the world, and made you and me, became a man, Jesus Christ. He died to pay for our sin. He then rose again from the dead. If we turn away from of our sin, and believe in Jesus Christ, we will be saved!

(In the short book, ***'Verses to Learn: How & Why'***, there is a section called, *'The Gospel Message'*. This also gives some key verses to learn, to know, as back up for sharing the message with a person. This book is under the

BOOKS tab at: **1peter1three.weebly.com**)

It is important to have a simple understanding of what the gospel message is, and to have some verses in the back of your mind to support what you are saying. You don't have to quote a verse for every line you say, but it is good to know a few verses to support the key points of the message.

Conclusion:

When dealing with a cult that is an offshoot of Christianity, focus on the identity of Jesus. Don't move from that place unless there is complete agreement. If there is not agreement on the deity of Jesus – one with the one true God (not 'a' deity) – then you are not talking about the same Jesus. Don't be drawn into other aspects of the religion, because if you are not talking about the same Jesus, it makes no sense.

When dealing with people from other religions, again, it is important to establish who Jesus is, and what the gospel message is. You may also encounter some push-back, for example from Muslims saying, '*God cannot hang on a cross and be killed!*' (I've heard this many times. They feel such an image of God is beneath him, disgraceful, an image of defeat). I simply say this is the 'revelation' of the Scriptures, what is clearly taught, and it has deep meaning about his love for us, and his power to defeat death.

But this mode of sharing with people from other religions is different from dealing with cults. It is more of a presentation of what is taught, and an invitation to believe, rather than disputing a 'twisting' of Scripture.

We do need to know some Scripture. But more importantly than *what* we know, is *who* we know – and that we have the courage to stand with him. There will be times we have answers, and

the Lord gives us wisdom to speak.¹ But there will be other times it will not be about talking the talk but walking the walk. We may need to turn our eyes away and tell people we don't look at things like that because we believe in Jesus. There may be times we decline to go somewhere with people.

More important than what we know and say to defend the faith, is how we defend the faith by the integrity of our walk with Jesus in secret.

'The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure...' (James 3:17)

'Your Father who is unseen, sees what is done in secret and will reward you.'
(Matthew 6:18)

¹ Luke 21:14-15; John 14:26

Thank you for taking time to read this book. I hope it encouraged you!

For more free devotionals, videos and books, please visit the website below, or the APP (1Peter1:3):

www.1peter1three.weebly.com



For more resources on sharing Jesus with others, please visit:

www.sharingyourfaith.weebly.com



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'For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.'

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.'

(1 Corinthians 1:18-25)