

Doorstep Dialogues

What should we do when the cults come to our door? Consider for a moment the people who live in your street. Perhaps there is someone with whom you would love to share the gospel but the opportunity never seems to present itself. Now imagine opening your door one day to find that person at your door, with a Bible under their arm, and saying “Can I talk to you about God?” That is exactly what a Mormon or Jehovah’s Witness is doing, coming around to talk about God. It’s just a bit more of a challenge, but if we are prepared we can share the good news with them and make a real difference.

Here are some simple guidelines:

THE PREPARATION

This starts before you open the door.

- ◆ Know your own faith. Make sure you can share your faith.
- ◆ Know something about the belief system of the group: Which groups are active in your area? How can you find out more about them? NB The local Christian bookshop can be very helpful here.
- ◆ Know your position in Christ:

Remember that no matter how good they are at confusing you, they cannot 'un-save' you. No matter how little you understand, you are still secure in Jesus.

- ◆ Be aware of the reality of Ephesians 6 – ‘the armour.’
- ◆ Practice communicating – ‘it ain’t what you say but it is the way that you say it.’

WHAT NOT TO DO

1. Do not panic or react. Some Christians think that if they fail in any way they have really blown it, and so don’t even try. Others cannot stand to hear some of what cultists routinely say and wish to jump in and correct them as a matter of urgency. Either way you close the door on an excel-

lent opportunity. If you have nothing else to share you have your testimony.

2. Do not exchange insults. If you get to know these people, you often find that they do not fit the stereotype picture many have of cultists. Insulting them is the same as shouting at foreigners in the foolish belief that they will understand better.
3. Do not feel obliged to talk if it is truly inconvenient. Tell them you're busy and arrange for them to call back, perhaps at a time when you can have someone with you.
4. Do not be afraid to say that you don't know. There are things they do not know and they often get asked questions on which they have to do some research. Say you don't know and offer to find out. It is also an opportunity to have them call again.
5. Do not do anything you are too uncomfortable doing. We all can feel a little on the spot when people call and that should not put us off talking to people. However, you are not obliged to meet them on your own, have them in your house if you don't want to, go to their meetings or take lots of literature.
6. Do not try to win the argument, try to win the person.

WHAT TO DO

1. Do listen. You win the right to be heard by first listening.
2. Do seek to understand. They get so many people who slam doors in their faces, misrepresent them, caricature them and abuse them that if you listen and seek to do some genuine bridge building you will touch their hearts.
3. Know your facts – do not waffle, exaggerate or make things up!
4. Do ask Questions. Turn your remarks and counter-arguments into questions if you can so that the onus is on them to think and respond rather than listen and react.
5. Have literature ready. They will expect you to take theirs; it is reasonable to expect them to take yours in exchange. This may not happen with the Jehovah's Witness, but this can be overcome when you meet them again

by writing them a letter outlining some points you want to make, based on literature you have. Explain that you thought it would be easier if you wrote it down so they can take it away and look into it. They will take a personal note, but not printed literature.

6. Know what to do next if they respond. They have a game plan and know how to proceed if you show interest and will invite you to church or set up a study programme, or both. Does your church run an Alpha course, Y course, or Christianity Explored? Use it. Is there an event you can invite them to?
7. Have a back up in someone who knows more than you, or literature with which you are familiar that can fill the same role.
8. Go to church and be involved - otherwise you will be the blind leading the blind. Your credibility is shot if you show them what is wrong with their church and then tell them that you do not attend church because your church is hopeless.
9. Read your Bible. You do not have to be a theologian but you should know the basics and more familiar passages.
10. Know what you believe and why. The gospel is mystical but it is also logical and can be explained in terms of logical and philosophical sense. Can you share the heart of gospel in 2 minutes? Practice and prepare.
11. Have a prepared script. "When someone comes to the door I will say this and do these things." That way you will not have to make it up on the spot as so many seem to feel they should. God can be in your plans as well as in their execution. Know what you want to do in the time you have – do not spend 2 hours on 'irrelevancies' and then have no time for the 'essentials.'
12. Tell them you are a Christian. No good comes from being "found out," and they will work it out for themselves a lot faster than you think. Can you share your testimony in 2 minutes? Practice and prepare. Your testimony is not your life story – be specific for the occasion. Mormons especially appreciate testimony. If you do this for Jehovah's Witnesses do try to relate what you are saying to specific Scriptures. For example, "and then I knew I was saved, just as Jehovah tells us about certainty in 1 John 5:12,13."
13. Finally, pray for them because they are lost, and their search for God has

led them to the wrong places. Pray that God will take your simple presentation and have it speak to their hearts. Now you know what to do to make a difference.

SOME SUGGESTED CONVERSATION STARTERS

No Time at Present or Want to Prepare

“I am a Christian myself and these things do concern me. I would not mind discussing them but I really do not have time right now. Would you be able to call back - say tomorrow morning/afternoon/evening?”

“We would be glad to call back. Meanwhile would you like to take this booklet to read and perhaps we can discuss it further when we return?”

“Yes, I'll read it if I can find time. Can I ask you to read one of mine?”

Doorstep Conversation

They may not always want to come in and you may be happier talking on the doorstep the first time. Suggested starters.

“I go to --- Church in the town and we sometimes discuss these things.”

“As a Christian I'm concerned about these things too.”

“What sort of a message?”

The State of the World

“It worries me too, which is why I am so glad that Jesus came to do something about it. He is the only way that people can be put right.”

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