

How to Talk to Someone Who Believes Something Weird: Understanding and Responding to New Religious Movements

New and alternative religious movements which claim to be the one true expression of Christian faith have been a constant throughout the history of the Church. This workshop will help to identify the essential characteristics of these groups including Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ - Latter-Day Saints. Additionally, suggestions will be made as to how best to share the Gospel with them.

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I. Introduction

Aberrant Christian/biblical movements have been part of religious history from the time of the Garden of Eden forward – cp. Matthew 7:15-20

- Began with Satan himself – “Did God say?”
- Evidenced in the Old Testament – throughout the New Testament
- Regularly throughout church history, e.g. Harold Brown's volume – *Heresies*
- Will continue and intensify to the end and the return of Christ. cp. Matthew 24; Mark 13

II. Why (speaking from the human perspective) does this happen?

- 1) Rationalism versus supernaturalism
- 2) Date setting
- 3) Spiritual counterfeiting

III. How do we recognize aberrant groups?

Among other approaches it may be simplified to four dynamics corresponding to the operations of mathematics:

- 1) Addition: adding to scripture; additional scripture, aberrant translations, authoritative interpretations – (examples will be given)
- 2) Subtraction: subtracting from the nature of Jesus Christ (fully God/fully man) and the triune God
- 3) Multiplication: multiplying the way of salvation – works oriented
- 4) Division: claiming to be the one true church, further dividing the body of Christ¹

IV. Responding includes

- 1) Recognizing the temporal nature of false claims – Matthew 7. No panic here. They are all doomed to failure.
- 2) Recognizing the need for personal evangelism and witness: Matthew 7
 - a. Know the truth
 - b. Understand the faith group's false doctrine
 - c. Understand the use of biblical vocabulary – not definition
 - d. Stick to the basics
 - e. Focus on the nature of Jesus and salvation – salvation by grace through faith
 - f. Share scriptural basics – Eph. 2:8-9; Rom 6:23; 10:9-13
 - g. Share your testimony

¹ I am appreciative to the Watchman Fellowship for the insights on the use of mathematical principles.