

WITNESSING TO MORMONS

Speaking the truth in love to the “Latter-day Saints”

by Paul Carden

Centers For Apologetics Research
P.O. Box 1196
San Juan Capistrano
CA 92693 USA
TheCenters@aol.com
www.TheCenters.org

Tel: 949.496.2000
Fax: 949.496.2244

Do you believe in “divine appointments?”

“The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps” (Prov. 16:19).

I thought it was only an errand. While driving back to the Centers’ office after picking up some envelopes from the printer I noticed two Mormon missionaries standing on a sidewalk preparing to go out on their proselytizing calls. It was an opportunity I couldn’t pass up.

I pulled over, got a tract “New Light on Joseph Smith’s First Vision” from my glove compartment, walked up to the young men, and greeted them. One was from Utah, the other from Idaho; one of them had been “on the field” for only a week. After getting to know them a bit, I offered them the tract, telling them that it had been written by someone who had done careful firsthand research on Mormon prophet Joseph Smith’s claim to have been visited by God the Father and Jesus in a grove near his home in upstate New York.

When our curbside conversation ended half an hour later, I marveled at how God had guided the encounter — easily the most positive and productive in my more than 20 years of witnessing to Mormons!

As I drove back to the office and replayed the exchange in my mind, several points stood out. I’d like to share them with you in the hope that you’ll be better prepared when *your* next divine appointment comes:

First, build a bridge. When cult missionaries come to your door, get to know something about them personally — their names, where they’re from, how long they’ve been in the group, and even how (and why) they joined. Then, begin by talking about something of mutual interest, like a point of doctrine especially dear to them. (This reflects the approach that the apostle Paul modeled for us in Acts 17.)

Second, stick to the point. Even though the conversation covered a lot of ground, the Lord graciously enabled me to keep steering it back to two key issues: What is your hope? and How can we know what is true? The Joseph Smith story outlined in the tract was relevant because, as persistent questioning confirmed, the missionaries’ hope rests on him — on his personal integrity, his credibility as a prophet of God, his interpretation of Scripture, and even his personal permission to enter eternal life! Admittedly, there are many controversial (and even devastating) points to discuss about Mormonism; however, I knew my time was short and that I might not get another opportunity to lovingly present the truth to them.

Sticking to the main issue of their hope and how we know truth naturally opened the way to share from God's Word, our final and authoritative standard. Using a technique developed by Mark Cares in his book *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*, I took them first to Matthew 5:48 ("Be ye therefore perfect"), then to Hebrews 10:10-18 ("For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"), asking them to read each passage aloud from their own copies of the King James Version. (While Mormons often question the credibility of Scripture verses that conflict with their teachings, none will reject these two.) And contrasting Matthew 7:15-16 ("Ye shall know them [i.e., false prophets] by their fruits") with the tests given in Deuteronomy 13 and 18 helped the missionaries to see that Joseph Smith's claims must be judged by God's Word.

Third, offer a clear alternative. Too many Christians "share" about Mormonism by ruthlessly tearing down the missionaries' cherished beliefs without offering them any hope in return. Remember that every Mormon missionary has a "testimony" — usually about the Mormon church, the Book of Mormon, and Joseph Smith. Be ready to tell of what Jesus has done for *you* personally and to back up your hope with Scripture (e.g., Galatians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5, 1 John 5:10-13).

Fourth, end on a positive note. Don't get emotional or let your frustration with the missionaries' words or attitudes get the better of you! Believe it or not, this has been my downfall on more than one occasion, as my dear wife can attest. Don't think you've accomplished anything unless you've treated them with "gentle ness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15), and don't casually ridicule their beliefs. Bear in mind that, if you've done your job well, you've left two young people weighed heavily with the possibility that they're devoting two precious years of their lives to spreading a lie. Remember, too, that the messenger (*you*) can be just as important as the message in these situations; by parting as friends you can counteract the stereotypes Mormons often nurture about being willfully misunderstood or persecuted.

Fifth, have something good for them to take home. This isn't always possible, but it almost always helps. Even after I said goodbye, that tract was still in the senior missionary's hand; and God willing, it would be read later that day and its references checked for accuracy. These "paper missionaries" keep working even after you've bidden the cultist fare well. (For a great selection of tracts for Mormon missionaries and friends, call our partner ministry IRR at [616] 451-4562 or visit them on the Internet at www.irr.org.)

Finally, pray for them. Bring them daily before the "throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16) and trust God to continue working, by His Spirit, through His Word and your witness!

There are many fine books and other materials that contrast Mormonism and Christianity; for a list see our bibliography. By far the best single resource I've seen on practical evangelism among Mormon friends, neighbors, loved ones, *and* missionaries is Pastor Mark Cares' book *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*, which also has an excellent companion video. For ordering information, call WELS Outreach Resources at (800) 884-9312.

You and I are to "be ready in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2). Please pray for our CFAR teams around the world as we equip pastors and lay believers to defend their faith and *win cultists to Christ* in the former Soviet Union, eastern Europe, Latin America, and beyond. 🌐



Paul Carden is the executive director of the Centers for Apologetics Research (CFAR), an international network of cult research and education agencies serving eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Latin America, and Africa. To contact him, write to TheCenters@aol.com.

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