The Jehovah's Witnesses: history and beliefs

I. History

- 1. The Jehovah's Witnesses were founded by Charles Taze Russell in 1884.
- 2. Russell claimed that reading his writings was more useful for gaining 'the light of the Scriptures' than reading the Bible itself.
- 3. Russell and his successors made numerous false prophecies. For instance, he stated that Armageddon would end in 1914 with "the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership." When the world did not end, he later wrote "In the year 1918, [God will destroy] the churches wholesale [and] any that escape shall come to the works of Pastor Russell".

Relevant Bible passages:

"[Jesus] replied: "Watch out ... For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them." – Luke 21:8

II. Beliefs

- 1. The Watchtower, the corporate name of the Jehovah's Witness organization, is God's theocratic organization on Earth
- 2. Jesus is the archangel Michael and is a created being
- 4. Salvation is obtained through faith in Jesus, obedience God's law and membership in God's organization
- 5. God's law says that blood transfusions, holidays, and birthdays are evil
- 6. Only a 144,000-member 'anointed class' are born again, are adopted sons of God, and have their sins completely forgiven through faith in Christ

Revelant Bible passages:

"if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed" – Gal. 1:8

III. Sharing the gospel with Jehovah's Witnesses

- 1. Unless the Watchtower's claim to be God's ultimate authority on earth is refuted, Jehovah's Witnesses will not question their beliefs. Helpful issues:
- 2. In 1961, the Watchtower created their own 'translation' of the Bible, the New World Translation, which alters the Bible to support Watchtower theology. It inserts the name 'Jehovah' into the New Testament 237 times; it changes John 1:1 from 'the Word was God' to 'the Word was a god'; it inserts the word 'other' four times into Col. 1:15-18, etc...
- 3. The Bible obviously never claims that Jesus is the archangel Michael. See Heb. 1:5-2:9, Jude 1:9/Matthew 4:10, Dan. 10:13
- 4. All Christians are born again, are adopted sons of God and have their sins completely forgiven. See John 1:12-13, 1 Pet. 1:23, Eph. 1:5-7
- 5. Show love. Pray earnestly. Encourage Jehovah's Witnesses to read the Bible themselves.