



## Four Types of Christian Organizations

By Rodney Pitzer & Andy Preslar

Broadly speaking there are four types of Christian organizations. These four types are driven by the values of the leaders of these organizations. Which of the following values do you share?

**I. Unvarnished Gospel: Christians should not become socially involved, but focused on the soul.** Advocates of this position appeal to verses such as John 6:27, "do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life . . .", or I John 2:17 "this world is passing away . . ." Given this position, it follows that Christians should not give to non-Christian ministries, who are laboring only for the "food which perishes." Many of those who hold this position of social non-involvement also believe in a sort of dualism between the mind (or spirit) and the body. The "spiritual" realm is contrasted with the "fleshly" and visible realm, to mean that the spiritual alone is good and valuable. It logically follows that one would only give to ministries that minister to the soul of man. Ministries which minister primarily to the physical needs of people; are relatively valueless.

**II. Christians should become involved in social "good works," but only insofar as doing so helps us to spread the Gospel.** Here social involvement is viewed as a means to an end. Unlike the first position, advocates of this qualified social involvement believe in doing social good works, but like the social non-involvement position, advocates here would also not give to non-Christian ministries. The reason is, non-Christian ministries do not preach the Gospel, so the proper motivation for giving is lacking. Proponents also believe that their position helps them to guard against "association with the world." By giving only to Christian ministries we avoid both compromising the Gospel and offending a "weaker brother" who might mistake our motives if we gave to a non-Christian organization.

**III. Christians should, without reservation, seek to minister to people's physical and spiritual needs.** Unlike the qualified social involvement position, this "unqualified" position sees social good works as an end in themselves. The reason is that advocates of this position view human beings as a whole, consisting of an immaterial component (soul) and a material component (body). But these "parts" of

man are not radically independent of each other. One cannot neglect the body without also, to some extent, neglecting the soul. Hence, the body is, on this view, intrinsically valuable, and meeting the physical needs of man is an end in itself. On this view, social involvement is a responsibility of all Christians. God created the physical realm, including the human body. Hence, we are to take good care of it, for God only creates what is good. Therefore, on this position, we should minister to the soul *and* the body. We may give to those ministries that preach the Gospel and engage in discipleship. We may also give to ministries which use social good deeds as a means to spread the Gospel; however, ministering to the body is not simply a means to an end.

**IV. The Social Gospel - a Christian's spiritual duties are reducible to, or the same as, his social duties.** In the words of a seminal proponent of this view: "When we submit to God, we submit to the supremacy of the common good. Salvation is the voluntary socializing of the soul" (Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*). According to this position, we need to "overhaul our understanding of the kind of change we hope to produce by personal conversion and regeneration" (ibid.). Like the third view, the social gospel advocates unqualified involvement in social good works, but unlike the third view, and in opposition to the entire doctrinal tradition of the church, the social gospel subverts the spiritual needs of man in favor of his physical and social needs. This is a startling reversal of the tendencies of the first two positions. The social gospel rests upon the assumptions that, (a) the biblical picture of Christ is distorted and in need of serious modification, (b) miracles are impossible, and (c) the problem of sin and evil can be eradicated by means of changing the conditions of society. On this position, interestingly, a "Christian" should give to any organization which is striving to create a better society, but probably should not give to any ministry which proclaims the biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Are you giving to ministries that represent your values? No one is possessed of unlimited resources. Make your contributions count as to what is important to you by examining your values and then comparing them to the values of charitable organizations.

### MinistryWatch.com Database Breakdown (04/25/06)

Total Ministry Profiles	509
With Financial Information	490
With Analyst Comments	183
With Ministry Response	42
Financial Efficiency Ratings	452
Last Ratings Update	04/04/06
Next Ratings Update	04/29/06
Transparency Grades	499
Honor Roll (A's)	416
Watch List (D's, F's)	30
Total Ministry Profiles	509
Advocacy	23
Christian Growth	55
Community Development	32
Educational Media	75
Evangelism	41
Evangelism Support	60
Fellowship Evangelism	24
Foreign Missions	90
Leadership Training	16
Publishing	13
Radio/TV Stations	18
Relief and Development	62

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## Search Ministries

By J. Andrew Preslar

### Christian Ministry in the Course of Life

Search Ministries ("Search") is a nationwide organization comprised of branch offices in 19 states whose purpose is to equip adults for a lifestyle of ministry. The primary focus is upon helping believers to be effective witnesses for Christ among their unconverted peers in every sphere of life - hence, a "lifestyle of ministry." This mission involves evangelism and discipleship training by means of carefully developed small-group workshops, seminars, conferences and individual instruction. Many of these out-



reaches are designed to take place in informal settings where people are likely to feel comfortable, such as homes, coffee shops, or one-to-one over lunch. Search staff members, most of whom are married, seminary-trained men, oversee, direct and facilitate local Search outreaches. These staffs serve in a variety of roles, including "lifestyle evangelism" trainers, personal mentors and theological educators. Overall, Search appears to have achieved a happy union between structured programs and informal, personal outreaches. Each staff member shares a common

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## Search Ministries

### Transparency Grade

A

Search Ministries exhibits a great deal of openness as evidenced by its responses to requests for information.

### 5 Star Financial Efficiency Ratings

★★★★★

Search Ministries has less overhead expenses and is able to direct a larger portion of its financial resources directly towards its programs than other ministries.

(Continued from page 1)

commitment – to make disciples of Jesus Christ; and each has a common stock of ministry programs; at the same time, Search “allows them to do ministry in an environment of creativity that has produced some cutting edge ideas and materials.” Search performs ministry on three levels: (1) direct outreach to “seekers” (unbelievers who show an interest in God), (2) discipling new believers by helping them to learn the principles of the Faith, and (3) training Christians in art of lifestyle evangelism so that they can become spiritually reproductive.

### Dialogue Evangelism

Search trains Christians to reach out to people in a “non-threatening” manner, which means developing trust-based relationships with unbelievers while inviting them to consider the claims of Christ. In this way, evangelism takes on the form of a dialogue in which “all kinds of religious beliefs and perspectives can be shared and explored openly.” This approach to Christian witness can be contrasted (more or less sharply) with tightly packaged Gospel presentations which proceed through a set number of “steps” and culminate by asking the non-believer to “make a decision” for Christ. Search definitely wants people to make such a decision; in fact, it produces a pamphlet that follows the basic pattern of most Gospel tracts, but Search also recognize that we live in a post-Christian culture in which most people simply do not share enough common presuppositions with Christian believers as to make the Gospel immediately intelligible to them. Search trains people to share the Gospel in the context of “basic life issues” so that when the biblical perspective on life is presented, it is seen both in its contrast to the myriad and confused views of secular culture and in its startling relevance to the problems of contemporary life. Search’s “seeker-sensitive” programs do not, however, get to this point in any hurry, and it often takes several sessions for the discussion to progress to the point where it is appropriate to focus upon the biblical message.

### A Reasonable Faith

None of this is to say that Search prevaricates upon or compromises the truth of the Gospel. They train people for a lifestyle of ministry that is rooted in “the full assurance that the message you communicate is absolutely trustworthy.” Search’s original resource (which is still offered) is a 12-lesson course in Christian apologetics entitled “I’m Glad You Asked (IGYA).” This course is designed to help Christians answer some common (and less common) objections to and questions about the faith. IGYA shows believers how these questions can be used as effective witnessing opportunities, and at the same time those who take the course are strengthened in their own faith through learning that there are solid, biblical answers to even the toughest questions. According to Search, “[t]he end result will be a new sense of confidence and competence to communicate the eternal message of God’s love in Jesus Christ.”

The guiding principle in Search’s method of “dialogue evangelism,” where sincere questions about Christ are lovingly met with sound

answers, is that “real faith isn’t blind beliefism. It is a process that engages your intellect as well as emotions.” If Christianity is not true, then faith in Christ, no matter how sincere, is utterly misplaced. On the other hand, if there are, as Search maintains, compelling reasons to think that Christianity is true, then one ought to let nothing, no fear of persecution, no selfish ambition, no lust of the flesh, no emotional baggage, stand in the way of conversion to Christ.

## Search Ministries

### Supporters Might Say

- Search helps Christians to reconcile their obligation to share their faith with the routine of daily life by integrating a “lifestyle evangelism.”
- Search’s approach to outreach is an effective way to get people involved in discussions about the most important things pertaining to this life and the next.
- Search’s training materials are full of “practical, workable ideas” for lifestyle evangelism.
- Search does not evade the “tough questions,” but tackles them directly and effectively. This can help to establish the intellectual credibility of the Gospel, thus removing a barrier to faith.
- Many of Search’s staff members are very well trained, and most have years of experience in some kind of Christian ministry.
- Search does not “bully” people with the Gospel; rather, the truth is shared in a loving and sensitive way, in which everyone has the opportunity to ask questions and share ideas.

### Critics Might Say

- Some Christians are suspicious of “lifestyle” evangelism. Many of these believe that the evangelist should get right to the point and demand a swift decision on the part of the unconverted.
- Likewise, some believers are critical of “dialogue” evangelism. Such critics normally maintain that the Gospel should take the form of non-negotiable proclamation.

### Worldview Considerations

- Search subscribes to an evangelical statement of doctrine.
- Search is committed to the principle that the Christian faith can be defended on evidential and rational grounds.
- Search’s high view of reason leads them to affirm the uniqueness of Christianity, including the notion of salvation through Christ alone; i.e., Search rejects relativism in favor of an absolute view of truth, including religious truth. If Christianity is true, then anything which contradicts essential Christian doctrines is false.
- Search affirms the doctrine of eternal security – anyone who at any time believes in Jesus Christ will never, come what may, be condemned.

ought to be aware of, for skeptics and/or seekers who have honest questions about the faith. Search explores these questions and answers with seekers in a variety of informal and more structured settings. They also train other Christians to do likewise. This is the essence of Search’s ministry.

People do, however, have barriers in their lives other than intellectual ones, and this often make it difficult for them to trust in Christ. Many adults have had bad experiences with what they call “organized religion.” Sometimes they have rejected Christ because of a perceived “put down” or because of exposure to pushy or hypocritical Christians. Search trains believers to reach out in educated and spiritually-sensitive ways to such persons, noting that: “When a person comes to Christ, it is usually because a believing friend lovingly sought to overcome these barriers. Overcoming these barriers in a relational context constitutes the central strategy of lifestyle evangelism.” Confidence in the truth of the Gospel allows Christians to overcome *intellectual* barriers to the Gospel. Developing relationships based upon trust helps to overcome *emotional* obstacles. Finally, there is the *volitional* barrier – whether a person will choose to accept Christ or reject him. This, says Search, is a matter for prayer. Christians are to be salt and light, not mind-benders.

### Bow and Arrow

Search’s philosophy of Christian evangelism through loving relationships is based upon two passages of Scripture: (1) Christ’s Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and (2) his Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The Great Commandment is that of love for God and for our neighbor. The Great Commission is to “make disciples of all nations. . . .” Search sees the relation between the two as like that of a bow and arrow. “Love is the bow that launches effective ministry. . . . Without love, all our efforts to be people helpers will ultimately fail.” This is the reason why Search places so much emphasis upon relationships, which entails that conversation, rather than mere proclamation, is the preferred method of evangelism. The Great Commission, then, is the arrow. On the Christian model, love has a point (pun intended). Search wants to love people into the Kingdom of God – to wash them in the pure water of baptism (Matthew 28:19), not with a lukewarm bath of false sentimentality.

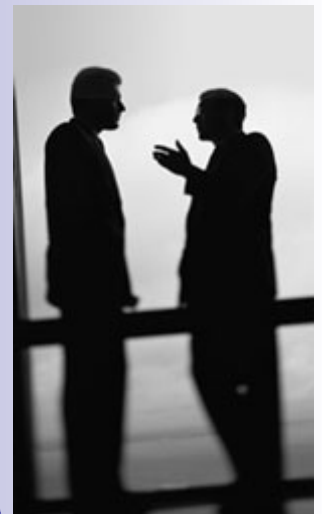
The first part of this philosophy – love – is not likely to find many detractors. The second part – which involves proclamation of the Gospel – is more controversial, especially in the contemporary intellectual climate of moral and religious relativism. Search’s entire enterprise is staked upon the absolute truth of Christianity and the conviction that there are good answers, which believers

### Organizational Details

Home Office	5038 Dorsey Hall Dr. Ellicott City, MD 21042-7711
Phone	(410) 740-5300
Website	www.searchministries.com
Federal Law	EIN: 75-1627393 Tax-Exempt Tax Deductible

### The Cycle of Ministry

Dialogue with an eye towards truth which sets the table for a clear and winning presentation and defense of the Gospel so that the willing can receive Christ and then grow and reproduce by means of spiritual formation and training in evangelism – this is the basic cycle of ministry for Search. Their own description of the cycle is “outreach, spiritual growth, lifestyle evangelism training, and apologetics training.” The last two stages in the cycle directly inform the first two, since they describe the way in which Search goes about outreach. The second stage, “spiritual growth,” or discipleship, is related to the others as the end is to the means. Search has developed and adapted programs and publications in order to practice and to help other believers learn this pattern of lifestyle ministry.



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2514 Plantation Center Drive  
Matthews, NC 28105  
1 (704) 841-7828

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