Sharing the Gospel with Jehovah’s Witnesses

Helpful Resources:
Jehovah’s Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse by David A. Reed
http://www.amazon.com/Jehovahs-Witnesses-Answered-Verse/dp/0801077397/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1201471649&sr=8-1

Answering Jehovah’s Witnesses Subject by Subject by David A. Reed
http://www.amazon.com/Answering-Jehovahs-Witnesses-Subject/dp/080105317X/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1201471649&sr=8-2

I. The History of Jehovah’s Witnesses
II. The Doctrine of Jehovah’s Witnesses
III. The Practical Life of Jehovah’s Witnesses
IV. How do we respond to Jehovah’s Witnesses?

I. The History of Jehovah’s Witnesses
a. Charles Russell began the Jehovah’s Witness organization in 1870 as a small Bible Study. He was part of a Presbyterian church originally but grew frustrated with doctrines such as predestination and eternal punishment. His Bible study grew and began passing out their materials. Later the Watch Tower Tract Society was established and then incorporated legally.
b. Russell wrote a seven volume series of books, Studies in the Scriptures, and believed that they were more valuable than the Bible itself.
   i. He said that studying the Word alone would not be sufficient, but studying his literature would.
c. Russell had never been ordained, was not familiar with Greek or Hebrew, and had never taken a systematic theology course of any kind in his life.
d. Russell was succeeded as President of the Watchtower Society by Joseph Franklin Rutherford. Rutherford succeeded in centralizing the authority of the organization, granting himself more power.
e. Since Rutherford’s death of cancer in 1942, the J.W.’s have become increasingly evangelistic in nature. The Watchtower has maintained its centralized authority and is now around 4 or 5 million strong.

II. What do Jehovah’s Witnesses Believe?
a. Describe the New World Translation
   i. Initially, JW’s used copies of the King James version, and relied on poor interpretation of the actual scriptures in order to propagate their beliefs. After a time, in the 1950s, they created the New World Translation, which specifically avoids words and phrases that might disagree with JW teachings. Most significantly, the name Jehovah was inserted into the New Testament some 237 times.
   ii. The translators who created the New World Translation were conveniently not named. The Watchtower said that this was so
that they would be anonymous, and therefore the credit would go
to God for the translation; however, this also shields them from
any blame and responsibility for the error of this seemingly
arbitrary translation. People who quit the society later revealed
that those who worked on the translations were not experts in
Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic.

b. Jesus Christ is not God
   i. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Jesus is actually the archangel
      Michael. They believe that He was the first created angel, and that
      the phrase “first-born” simply refers to the fact that because He
      was the first one, “He was like a firstborn son to God.”
   ii. They believe that He was the first creation of God and that He was
       perfect, and that God transferred Him into Jesus within Mary’s
       bosom.
   iii. They believe that Jesus was totally human and not a spirit during
        his life on earth, but that He resurrected as a spirit and was
        rewarded with immortality. They do not believe in His bodily
        resurrection.
   iv. Jehovah’s Witnesses will use passages such as the following in
       order to deny the deity of Christ:
       1. Colossians 1:15 - And He is the image of the invisible God, the
          first-born of all creation.
          a. Jehovah’s Witnesses will use this passage to
             suggest that Jesus was created and therefore does
             not carry God’s eternal attribute.
          b. This rendering reflects a poor understanding of
             Jewish culture and the meaning of the term first-
             begotten. This term is used to signify the authority
             and preeminence of the eldest son.
       2. John 14:28 – Jesus said, “… I go to the Father; for the
          Father is greater than I.”
          a. Jesus definitely emptied Himself of certain
             privileges, for a time, when He came to earth. He
             was not less in worthiness than the Father or less in
             deity, but in form.
          b. Kingdomhall.org – “Jesus Christ is inferior to God.”
       3. Psalm 110:1 - The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at My right
          hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet."
          a. Both Christians and JW’s will recognize the first
             “Lord” here (actually YHWH) as referring to God,
             and the second referring to Jesus.
          b. JW’s will say that God does not talk to himself, that
             that would be silly, and therefore Jesus must be
             inferior to God since God is talking to someone
             else.
c. We can use the JW’s own New World Translation here to prove this thinking incorrect. In Gen. 18:1-2, we read that “Jehovah appeared to [Abraham] as three angels.” Abraham addressed the three of them as Jehovah (vs. 3). Then, two left and went toward Sodom, and Abraham continued to call the remaining one “Jehovah.” In Sodom, Lot referred to the other two as “Jehovah.” Also Gen. 19:24 speaking of the destruction of Sodom says, “Then Jehovah made it rain sulphur and fire from Jehovah.”

v. Christians can point to a number of passages to prove Biblically the deity of Christ:

1. Isaiah 9:6 - *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*
   a. J.W.’s will say that this verse does not refer to Almighty God. But that is not a good argument since Isaiah 10:21 refers to Jehovah as “mighty God,” also without the article as in 9:6. This is true even in the NWT.

2. Jesus is called Jehovah. – Jer. 23:5 *“Behold, [the] days are coming," declares the Lord, "When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.'*

3. Jesus is called *the First and the Last* in Rev. 1:17, 2:8, 22:12-16 just as God is in Isaiah 44:6.

4. Jesus claims equality with the Father in John 10:24 – *I and the Father are one.*
   a. J.W.’s will say that this oneness refers to a unity in love as in John 17:11, but it is clear from the response of the Jews who took up stones to stone Him what He meant.

5. Jesus is said to possess all deity in Col. 2:9 – *For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.*

6. John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. NWT says “a god,” which is of course inconsistent even with their doctrine, but also a poor translation. It was largely borrowed from a 1937 translation by Johannes Greber, who admitted later that his translations came through spiritism and that his wife acted as a medium and told him what God wanted the
The Watchtower later condemned use of his materials, but still stands on the “a god” translation based on “good scholarship.”

c. The Holy Spirit is not God and is not personal
   i. Jehovah’s Witnesses define the Holy Spirit as “the impersonal, invisible active force that finds its source and reservoir in Jehovah God and that he uses to accomplish his will even at great distances, over light years of space. (Let Your Name Be Sanctified, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1961, p. 269).
   ii. The words Holy Spirit are not capitalized in the New World Translation.
   iii. The Holy Spirit is not considered to be a person (“He”) but a thing (“it.”)
   iv. Response to this doctrine:
      1. Scripture uses masculine pronouns to personally refer to the Holy Spirit (“He will teach you” (John 14:26), “He will bear witness of Me” (John 15:26), “I will send Him to you” (John 16:7) “He, when He comes, will convict the world” (John 16:8)
      2. The Holy Spirit exhibits the elements of personality
         a. Intelligence (Rom. 8:27)
         b. Emotion (Rom. 15:30)
         c. Volition (1 Cor. 12:11)
      3. He performs personal acts
         a. Works, searches, testifies, teaches, convicts of sin, regenerates, prays, guides, glorifies, calls, directs, forbids, loves, speaks
      4. He is susceptible to personal treatment
      5. He possesses divine names
         a. The Spirit of God – Gen. 1:2
         b. The Spirit of the Lord – Judges 3:10
         c. The Spirit of glory – 1 Pet. 4:14
      6. He possesses divine attributes
         a. Eternality – Heb. 9:14
         b. Omnipresence – Ps. 139:7
         c. Omniscience – Is. 40:13,14
         d. Omnipotence – Job 33:4
         e. Holiness – Ps. 51:11
      7. He is identified with Jehovah
         a. In Acts 28:25-27 Paul is quoting Isaiah 6:9, 10. He ascribes the speaking to the Holy Spirit, but Isaiah says that Jehovah is speaking (Is. 6:9)
            i. Acts 28:25 And when they did not agree with one another, they [began] leaving after Paul had spoken one [parting] word, “The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the
prophet to your fathers, 26 saying, 'Go to this people and say, "You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;

b. In Matthew 12:31,32, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is treated as an act against God. It is unforgivable.

d. Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the Trinity.
   i. (Explain the Trinity)
   ii. J.W.’s believe that this doctrine began around 2200 B.C. with ancient Babylonians and was adopted by the church later on.
   iii. They believe this doctrine to be unbiblical and Satanic in nature.
   iv. They say that the doctrine of the Trinity “insults God-given intelligence and reason.”
   v. Response to this denial of the Trinity:
      1. Scripture clearly teaches that there is only one God. (Deut. 4:35, “He is God, there is no other besides Him.”)
      2. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each called God
         a. Father – 2 Peter 1:17
         b. Son – Isaiah 9:6
         c. Holy Spirit – Acts 5:3,4 (3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back [some] of the price of the land? 4 "While it remained [unsold,] did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.")
      3. Scripture uses a plural pronoun to refer to God.
         a. The word elohim is frequently used to refer to God, and is actually a plural pronoun. It is used, however, with singular verbs – an abnormality in the Hebrew.
         b. From the beginning in Genesis, God referred to Himself as ‘Us.’
      4. We cannot understand everything! – Rom. 11:33
      5. How many times does the Bible mention the word Trinity? (None – this is an argument of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, but the Bible doesn’t use the word “theocracy” either)

e. Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the physical resurrection of Christ
   i. They claim that Christ did not physically arise from the grave, but that He did so spiritually, His body being dissolved or vaporized somehow by the Father.
   ii. We know this is not true as Jesus was seen, heard, and even touched by many after His resurrection.
f. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that the second coming already happened
   i. J.W.’s predicted that the second coming would occur in 1914. Obviously, it didn’t happen, and it was repredicted to happen in 1925. Again, the world did not end, and Jehovah’s Witnesses now say that Armageddon will occur before the generation alive in 1914 dies out.
   ii. J.W.’s believe that the 2nd coming did happen in 1914 in Heaven when Christ began to pay attention to what was happening on earth.
   iii. J.W.’s condemn themselves in much of their literature which denounces false prophecy and claims that those who propagate such heresy will be judged.

g. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that men will not suffer eternally, but be annihilated in Hell.

h. For salvation, a Jehovah’s Witness must study, meet, and be quizzed. He can then be baptized at which point he is asked two questions to which he responds “yes” in order to become a Witness. Neither question has anything to do with forgiveness.

III. Life as a Jehovah’s Witness

a. The Jehovah’s Witness community is a highly structured theocracy, with the Watchtower in Brooklyn, NY as its capitol.
   i. At the top is the President who speaks revelation from God.
   ii. At the next level down is the Governing Body who also speaks revelation from God.
   iii. Congregational elders preside over each community area.
   iv. Everybody else (evangelizers, etc.)

b. Because of this theocracy, Jehovah’s Witnesses regard any other form of earthly government to be part of Satan’s system (including the U.S. government).
   i. A person can be disfellowshipped for so much as voting in an election.

c. Judicial committees
   i. JW’s will hold tribunals to determine if somebody has violated the rules of the Organization. The number of tribunals per year is not known, but potentially well into the hundreds of thousands.
   ii. At a tribunal, men and women break down. Where a secular court holds certain freedoms of an individual in its power, a JW tribunal holds friendships, family relationships, and even one’s relationship to God in its hands.

d. Authority associated with disfellowshipping – total disconnection from family and friends within the Organization, cannot even so much as say hello. Families are limited to essential communication only.

e. Not allowed to celebrate holidays
   i. Man disfellowshipped for sending a birthday card

f. Not allowed to possess “Satanic” reading material
g. Not allowed to worship elsewhere – it would be a major thing for a JW to come to another church just to “check it out.”

h. Accountability for witnessing
   i. Motives of pride
   ii. Promotion
   iii. Witnessing on the right day (Saturday)

i. Broken homes due to disassociation or disfellowshipment

j. Double-think:
   i. Hierarchy compared to Roman Catholicism – JW’s denounce the hierarchy of Catholicism, but yet exhibit one very similar in their own Organization. This was made clear in a 1970s trial in which some local JW’s contested a leadership change at a local assembly hall.
   ii. Voting on what God says – Although the Organization condemns voting in political elections because a democracy is an inferior system to one run by God Himself, they actually vote on theological changes to determine whether or not they come from God. A 2/3 majority wins.
   iii. Prophecy not coming true

k. Demons everywhere
   i. JW’s often have an unhealthy and extreme fear of demons. They oftentimes won’t take literature from Christians in order to avoid potential demon infestation.

l. Facial expressions during church & listening to an elder

m. Bedroom challenged

n. These people aren’t even “Children of God” if saved after 1935. They are only saved to live here on earth forever. (144,000)

o. Blood transfusions – Acts 15:20 - but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

p. The Watchtower brings in millions of dollars each year, probably close to $100 million annually. They also have massive real estate holdings. However, it does not seem that the leaders are taking this money for themselves.

IV. How do we respond?

a. Pray!!!

b. 2 John 1:9-11 - 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into [your] house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

   i. This passage is best understood as referring to an “official” coming on the part of the false teachers, as well as an “official” reception by the host. In fact, the phrase “into [your] house” is actually better understood as “into the house.” Since the letter is addressed
to the church, it is probably referring to allowing these false teachers to be a part of the body or speak in church, or providing them assistance in some way. (Stott, F.F. Bruce)

ii. The bottom line is that we are not to “participate in his evil deeds,” and trying to win them to Christ is hardly doing so.

c. Preach the Gospel
   i. The best thing that you can offer them is not your superior knowledge of theology, but your personal relationship with Christ.
   ii. These are people who are caught in a works-based system of righteousness and need to hear of God’s grace.
   iii. Understand that for these people to leave their cult, it must mean leaving their life behind.

d. Watch yourself and your doctrine…
   i. Is your relationship with God personal? Or is it based on pride?
   ii. Do you value your system of logic more than God’s ways?
   iii. Are you more concerned with what your elders/leadership think about you, or living a Godly life no matter what?