

THE FINAL PAGE

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Cults: What To Look For

As you converse with people and listen to a wide variety of religious messages, there are some key characteristics or signs you can look for. Cults can be found with some or all of the following features:

Extra-Biblical Revelation. How has God revealed Himself? The Christian's answer is: God has revealed Himself "on many occasions in diverse manners" in days gone by (Old Testament dispensations). In these last days, however, He has revealed Himself fully and finally IN JESUS CHRIST (Heb. 1:1-2). Does that mean Jesus Christ speaks to me personally; one on one? Does Jesus tell me something, then perhaps appear to you and tell you something else? NO. Jesus selected apostles, and promised them ... that through them the Holy Spirit would communicate a body of truth. You see, THE APOSTLES WERE GUIDED INTO ALL THE TRUTH, as is affirmed in John 14:26 and John 16:13. It doesn't say they were guided into "much" of the truth, or "most" of the truth. The Holy Spirit, Jesus said, would guide these men into "all the truth." That's the promise. Was it fulfilled? Yes. We have "the faith" which was "once for all delivered unto the saints." And let us be reminded, there is only "one faith!" (Eph. 4:4). In the New Testament writings, we have the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25). Cult leaders usually claim extra-Biblical Revelation; we believe and we must preach the SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Presumptuous Messianic Leadership. Here's a principle we need to stand on, and communicate to people who might be tempted to join a cult: ONLY JESUS CHRIST DESERVES DISCIPLES.

Isn't that simple. But isn't that the absolute truth? Only Jesus Christ deserves disciples. Our message is — Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). He alone is our High Priest (Heb. 4:14). He alone is our Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). The church is the body of Christ, of which He is the Head (Eph. 1:22-23). Cults are characterized by PRESUMPTUOUS MESSIANIC LEADERSHIP. There are examples of men who are tragic wrecks of humanity, whose psychic nature is twisted and perverted; who traffic in anxiety AND THEY CLAIM TO BE WHAT JESUS IS. Watch for this. In these cults, a “messianic” human leader uses the power of charm, deceit and strong personality to impose his claims upon those who are ignorant of the Scriptures.

The Slavery of the Mind; no independence of thought. One mark of a cult is; the demand that you blindly accept the word of your superiors. You are not allowed to ask probing questions, or to investigate and study for yourself. There is no argument, no debate with the Messiah figure who is in charge. Cults are characterized by mental slavery; no independence of thought is permitted. Paul tells every Christian to TEST ALL THINGS, AND HOLD FAST WHAT IS GOOD, in 1 Thess. 5:21.

Denial of Privacy; regimentation. These cult leaders - it seems to be - ARE ADDICTED TO CONTROL. Maybe you've heard of a husband who exercises unreasonable control over his wife; he doesn't seem to trust her; he must control everything about her. Well, multiply that; magnify that. These cult leaders seem addicted to control; they get some kind of “buzz” out of keeping all their followers in tight circumstances of control. In the extreme - children may be separated from parents in the commune or husbands and wives separated. Not all cults use the same methods. But this seems to be common, and was reported of the Koresh group, near Waco, Tx. before that cult (at least in that location) was destroyed.

Finally, be aware of the difference between CULTS and NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY.

Cults are governed by an Imposter —
The church is governed by Jesus Christ. Eph. 1:22,23.

Cults are characterized by deception —
Jesus said, “Count the Cost.” Lk. 14:27-30.

Cults use coercion —
we use the gospel. Rom. 1:16.

Cults propagate human doctrine —
we preach the gospel, God's truth. 1 Thess. 1:8.

Cults utilize isolation —
in the Lord's church, we utilize influence. Col. 4:5,6.

Cults are known for mental suppression —
in Christianity, there is mental renewal. Rom. 12:1,2.

Cults offer an uncertain hope ——
Christianity offers real hope. 1 Pet. 1:3.

This is the final chapter in a Bible study workbook I've just published. The booklet is \$4.00, plus postage (and tax if ordering from Texas) ...

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