

REACHING THE KINGDOM OF THE CULTS

Calvary Chapel Bozeman - School of Ministry

Introduction to Cults

What is a Cult?

The word *cult* is derived from the Latin term “*cultus*” which means ‘worship’. In modern English, the term has a negative connotation referring to varying types of coercive groups with strange religious beliefs.

Christian Cults

“In a Christian context, the definition of a cult is, specifically, “a religious group that denies one or more of the fundamentals of biblical truth.” A cult is a group that teaches doctrines that, if believed, will cause a person to remain unsaved. A cult claims to be part of a religion, yet it denies essential truth(s) of that religion. Therefore, a Christian cult will deny one or more of the fundamental truths of Christianity while still claiming to be Christian.” (From *got questions.org*)

- The two most common teachings of Christian cults are that Jesus was not God and that salvation is not by faith alone.
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A biblical definition of a cult is simply a group that believes in a “*different Jesus*” than the Jesus of the Bible.

- **2 Corinthians 11:3-4 (ESV)** - But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. **4** For if someone comes and proclaims *another Jesus* than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a *different spirit* from the one you received, or if you accept a *different gospel* from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

Cult leaders are highly deceptive

- **2 Corinthians 11:13-14 (ESV)** - For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. **14** And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.
- **Galatians 1:8 (ESV)** - But even 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.

Common traits of a Cult

- **Authoritarian Leadership:** The leader dictates the rules with absolute power, often demanding unquestioning loyalty.
- **Coercive Persuasion:** Employing indoctrination techniques—like intense repetition, guilt, or fear—to break down critical thinking and independence.
- **Isolation:** Cutting members off from family, friends, and outside information to make them totally dependent on the group.
- **Exploitation:** Using members for financial, physical, or sexual gain.
- **Behavioral Control:** Strictly regulating members' schedules, diets, sleep, relationships, and finances.

Infamous Cults

- **Manson Family:** A 1960s California commune led by Charles Manson. Manson directed his mostly young, brainwashed followers to commit a series of gruesome, high-profile murders in 1969.
- **Peoples Temple:** Led by Jim Jones, this group moved from the U.S. to a commune in Guyana. In 1978, it ended in the tragic mass murder/suicide of over 900 members via cyanide-laced poison.
- **Heaven's Gate:** Founded in the 1970s by Marshall and Bonnie Nettles, this UFO-based religious sect believed alien spacecraft would take their souls to a higher level. It ended in 1997 with a coordinated mass suicide in San Diego County
- **Branch Davidians:** A religious sect that splintered from the Seventh-day Adventist movement, led by David Koresh. The group was thrust into the international spotlight in 1993 following a deadly 51-day standoff with federal agents in Waco, Texas.

Mainstream Cults

- **Mormonism:** (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or LDS) has the largest cult following with 17 million members worldwide. Mormonism was founded in the early 1800's by Joseph Smith. By adhering to Smith and his corrupt revelation, Mormonism denies the sufficiency of the Bible and distorts the nature of God, the Person of Jesus Christ, and the means of salvation. Latter-day Saints believe that God still speaks to humankind, that He has called new apostles and prophets and that revelation flows today as it did anciently.
- **Jehovah's Witnesses:** With 8.6 million followers, the Jehovah's Witnesses are the second largest worldwide cult. Their core belief is the rejection of the Trinity by claiming to be the witnesses of Jehovah. They believe salvation is obtained by a combination of faith, good works, and obedience. Jehovah's Witnesses reject the doctrine of the Trinity, believing Jesus to be a created being and the Holy Spirit to essentially be the inanimate power of God. Jehovah's Witnesses reject the concept of Christ's substitutionary atonement and instead hold to a ransom theory, that Jesus' death was a ransom payment for Adam's sin.
- **Church of Scientology:** Scientology is a secular philosophy and new religious movement founded by L. Ron Hubbard in the 1950s.
- **Christian Science:** A cult founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879 believing that the spiritual realm is the only true reality. They consider the physical, material world—including sickness, sin, and death—to be an illusion or a misconception of reality.
- **Church Universal and Triumphant:** CUT is a New Age cult in 1975 by Elizabeth Clare Prophet. Blending elements of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Theosophy, the group focuses on the "Ascended Master Teachings". The cult moved its headquarters to Emigrant, Montana in the Paradise Valley where many were deceived by apocalyptic predictions in the 1980s.

How to share the gospel with someone ensnared in a Cult

Be Ready

- **1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)** - but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

Share humbly

- **2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NKJV)** - And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, **25** in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, **26** and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.

Keep to the essentials of the gospel message

- **Establish the Bad News**
 - **Romans 3:10 (ESV)** - “There is none righteous, no, not one;”
 - **Romans 3:23 (ESV)** - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- **Proclaim the Good News**
 - **Romans 6:23 (ESV)** - For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - **Romans 5:8 (ESV)** - but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 - **John 3:16 (NKJV)** - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- **Urge a Response**
 - **Romans 10:9-10 (ESV)** - If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.
 - **Acts 2:38 (ESV)** - For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - **Acts 17:30 (ESV)** - The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,

Be dependent and steadfast in prayer

- **Ephesians 6:18-19 (NKJV)** - praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- **19** and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,
- **Colossians 4:3 (NKJV)** - meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,

- **2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (NKJV)** - But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- **2 Thessalonians 3:1-3 (NKJV)** - Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, 2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

Is it okay to invite a member of a cult into your home?

- The simple answer is, yes!
- Does 2 John 1:10 forbid this?
 - **2 John 1:10 (NKJV)** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him;
 - This verse refers to helping or supporting a false teacher in his itinerant ministry by welcoming him into your home. This verse does forbid welcoming an unbeliever into your for the sake of evangelism.

In conclusion...

- Cult members have been taken captive through the deceptive lies of the enemy.
- There is no salvation outside of Christ.
- Through prayerful, loving, and humble communication of the gospel, cult members can come to their senses and escape the snare of deception.
- Be prayerful and look for open doors! May the Lord use you as you avail yourself to Him!

Deliver those who are drawn toward death, And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.

Proverbs 24:11 (NKJV)

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" 14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:13-18 (NKJV)