

IDENTIFYING AND WITNESSING TO THE CULTS

1. **What is a cult?** (Judges 21:25; Prov. 14:12; 16:25)
 - a. Webster defines a cult as a system or community of religious worshipers who follow dogma and practice rituals established by a founder and who have an obsessive devotion to that person and/or his ideas.
 - b. A cult is a religious system of beliefs, worship, and rituals which grow out of and deviate from some previously established religion.
 - c. A cult includes the body of adherents to a person, idea, or thing regarded as unorthodox or spurious by others.

2. **What is a so-called Christian cult?**
 - a. Many religious groups take the name, **Christian**, but they do not adhere to the **fundamentals of the Christian faith**, “...*which was once and for all delivered to the saints.*” (Jude 3c)
 - b. The basic and **essential tenets of Christianity** include the following:
 - (1) **One God in essence** as understood in the **functionally distinct persons of the trinity**: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:19)
 - (2) The **deity of Jesus Christ**, the second person of the trinity. (Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3)
 - (3) The **true humanity of Jesus Christ** revealed through of the incarnation. (Matt. 1:21-25)
 - (4) The **total sinfulness of mankind**. (Rom. 3:10-12, 23)
 - (5) The eternal **salvation of mankind** is provided totally by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross where He bore the sins of the entire human race once for all time. (2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Heb. 9:28; 10:10, 12, 14; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Jn. 2:2)
 - (6) This salvation is **individually appropriated by believing in Jesus Christ** as one’s savior, putting one’s faith alone in Christ alone. (Acts 4:12; 16:31)
 - (7) The **scriptures** including Genesis through Revelation and excluding all other writings **are the final and absolute authority** in all matters of life and spirituality. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)
 - (8) The **interpretation of all scriptures** is to be **straight forward and literal** unless the context clearly demands a figure of speech. [Examples: “...*all the trees of the field will clap their hands.*” (Isa. 55:12), and “*The eyes of the Lord are in every place.*” (Prov. 15:3a)]
 - c. While a cult may grow out of and deviate from any previously established religion, so-called **Christian cults base their beliefs on the Bible**, but they distort the text, the meaning of words and the text, and/or add to the text. Those involved in Christian cults always claim to be **the only true Christians**.

- d. These **Christian cults** which deviate from the fundamentals of the faith, *“once delivered to the saints,”* should be the concern of every Christian. (Jude 3c)
- (1) Christians are to be *“wise as serpents, and innocent as doves.”* (Matt. 10:16)
 - (2) Christians must *“test the spirits to see whether they are from God;”*
(1 John 4:1)
 - (3) Christians must remember that in the last days many will pay *“attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,”* (1 Tim. 4:1)
 - (4) Christians must be able to **recognize false teachers** and false prophets, wolves in sheep’s clothes (1 John 4:1b; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; cf. Matt. 7:15)
 - (5) Christians must be able to give a *“defense for the hope that is”* within them. (1 Peter 3:15)
 - (6) Christians are not to be deceived and *“led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”* (2 Cor. 11:3; cf. Rom. 15:17, 18)
 - (7) Christians are not to accept *“another Jesus”* or a *“different gospel”* or a *“different spirit”* than those which The New Testament writers presented. (2 Cor. 11:4; cf. Gal. 1:6, 7, 8, 9)
 - (8) Christians are not to be so foolish that *“Having begun by the (Holy) Spirit, they are now somehow “being perfected by the flesh.”* (Gal. 3:3)
- e. The closest word in the New Testament to **“cult”** is the word **“sect,”** found nine times (from the Greek: αἵρεσις - airesis - meaning: religious sect, heretical sect, dissension, division).
- (1) The **Sadducees** (meaning: righteousness) were the Jewish party from the priesthood and were aristocrats and people of rank. They were strong adherents to the letter of the written law, but they rejected the later traditions of the elders. While they believed in the free will of man, they did not believe in the resurrection of the body or of any future life after death. They were described as a **“sect”** by the apostles. (Acts 5:17; cf. 23:8)
 - (2) Paul was called *“the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes”* (followers of Jesus Christ.). (Acts 24:5, 14)
 - (3) The **Pharisees** (meaning: separated, separatists) were the Jewish party from the scribes and were strong adherents to the letter of the law, which they continued to multiply into a form of extreme legalism. They held to a literal but fatalistic interpretation of the scriptures. They are described as a **“sect”** by the apostles. (Acts 15:5; 26:5)
 - (4) Peter writes concerning **“destructive heresies”** which will be introduced among believers. (2 Peter 2:1) Paul describes **heresies** (*factions*) as deeds of the flesh. (Gal. 5:20)
 - (5) Paul speaks to the Jewish leadership in Rome concerning **“this sect,”** (Christianity) which they claim *“is spoken against everywhere.”* (Acts. 28:22)

3. Some tenants and peculiarities of Christian Cults, (What they believe.):

- a. There is usually **one person** who exercises **dictatorial powers** over the cult and this person has the final authority above the Bible in all matters.
- b. **Rituals, worship, and practices** of the cult are **at variance with known scripture**.
- c. Support for such rituals, worship, and practices are often found in **writings other than the Bible**. Many cults incorporate ancient **Pagan rituals** and **occult practices**.
- d. Cults place strong **emphasis on human works** to obtain salvation, to maintain spirituality, or to retain good standing in the cult. (Eph 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5-7; Gal. 3:1-3)
- e. Many cults **replace Israel** in the scriptures with their own adherents. (Rom. 11:1, 2, 25-29)
- f. There are often **secret doctrines and rituals** known only by those initiated into the cult, or known only to a select group within the cult, or known only after so-called spiritual advance within the cult. (1 Tim. 4:1)
- g. Cults usually use a **non-literal interpretation** of the Bible. (2 Pet.1:20, 21; Rom. 1:20, 21)
- h. The **exclusivity of cults** often precludes anyone outside of their organization from obtaining salvation, spirituality, or any potential blessing from God. Those outside the cult are considered as infidels or reprobates.
- i. Cults are usually **preoccupied with money** and engage in **financial exploitation**.
- j. Cultists often engage in **sexual exploitation** and **religious enslavement**. (Rom. 1)

4. Questions to ask suspected cultists?

- a. Do you **base your teachings** on revelations or secret writings or manifestations other than the 66 books of the Bible? (Col. 2:18, 23; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18, 19)
There must be internal and external consistency. (Gal. 1:6-9)
- b. Is your **primary evangelistic task** the preaching of the gospel, as taught in the Bible, to those who are not of your number? (Mk. 13:10; Acts 10:36-43; 16:31; Rom. 1:15, 16; 1 Cor. 1:17, 18, 21, 23; 2:1, 2; 15:1)
- c. Do you believe that **Jesus of Nazareth** is the one, true, **eternal creator God** of the universe? (John 10:30; Col. 1:13-22; 2:9, 10; Heb. 1:2-4ff)

- d. Do you believe that Jesus Christ's **death on the cross** (Rom. 1:15, 16; 1 Cor. 1:17, 1 Cor. 1:18, 23; Phil. 2:8) is the **only basis** for the **forgiveness of your sins** and **The only provision for your eternal salvation**? (1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:14, 20; 1 Thess. 5:9, 10; Heb. 9:26-28; 10:10, 12, 13; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:1, 2)
- e. Do you believe that **Jesus Christ rose literally from the dead** in a bodily resurrection form? (Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:34; Rom. 1:3, 4; 1 Cor. 15:4, 20-22)
- f. Are you **personally trusting in Jesus Christ** as your savior? (John 1:12; John 3:16; 11:25, 26; 14:1; Acts 4:12; 16:31)
- g. Do you depend on your work or any works other than the **work of Christ on the cross**, even in part for your salvation? (John 6:29; Gal. 2:16; 3:1-3; Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5; 1 John 5:11-13)

5. How should you witness to members of a cult?

- a. **Know basic Bible teachings, the truth** of the Scriptures. (Jn. 8:32; 2 Tim. 2:15)
- b. **Don't assume** that every cultist believes the same thing.
- c. Ask **strategic and specific questions**. (cf. point 4)
- d. Cultists are **trained to answer objections** and they have **so-called proof texts**.
- e. **Always use your Bible** and check the Scriptures and the contexts. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb 4:12)
- f. Always **define Biblical terms** clearly.
- g. **Be loving, gentle, and respectful**. (1 Pet. 3:15)
- h. **Emphasize the gospel**. (1 Cor. 15:1-4ff; Gal. 1:7-9, 11; 2 Cor. 11:4; cf. Eph. 1:7; 2:8, 9)
- i. **Give your testimony**. (Acts 22:1-21; 26:4-23)
- j. **Demonstrate the humanity and the deity** of Jesus Christ. (see point #7 below)

6. Who do the cultists say Jesus was?

Note It is interesting to note how many cults began by someone receiving a revelation from an angel of light, a fallen angel or demon.

- a. **Mohammad, the founder of Islam**, received such a revelation telling him that Jesus Christ was not God, and that Jesus did not die on the cross for man's sins, and that man can save himself by keeping the law of Mohammad. Muslims, followers of Mohammad, worship the moon god, Allah. To Muslims Jesus was only one of the prophets.
- b. **New Age adherents**, such as Shirley Mac Lain believe that we are all Jesus Christ, that is, we all have the "Christ-ness," His nature in us. The "*New Age Jesus*" was a man who evolved into an ascended master on whom an impersonal force rested.

- c. **The Jehovah Witnesses** say that Jesus was the archangel Michael, the first created being of God. He is “*a god*” rather than “*the God.*” He was a man who died on a stake and rose invisibly as a spirit.
- d. **The Mormons** say that Jesus was simply one god in a pantheon of gods and goddesses. They say that He was the brother of Lucifer, Satan, and the cross and blood of Jesus Christ are foolishness.
- e. Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of **Christian Science** (so-called), taught that Jesus was just a pleasant divine idea.
- f. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the **Unification Church**, known as the “Moonies” says that Jesus was a man who failed in His mission, and Sun Myung Moon is the “*second coming*” to fulfill the unfinished work of Jesus Christ.
- g. Those of **the Baha I faith** say that Jesus is one of nine great world manifestations. They say it doesn’t matter what religion you believe, since all religions are basically the same.
- h. **The Unitarians** say that Jesus was a good man but His followers mistakenly deified Him.
- i. The **intergalactic space confederation**, those so-called space aliens, highly evolved humans in UFOs are attempting to save mankind from annihilation. Jesus was one of these highly evolved space aliens.
- j. The **Spiritists** say that Jesus is an advanced medium in the sixth sphere in astrological projection, whatever that is!
- k. The **Rosicrucians** say that Jesus is a manifestation of cosmic consciousness, the impersonal universal mind.
- l. Maharishi Yogi and those of **Transcendental Meditation** say that Jesus was an enlightened guru who never suffered or died for anyone.

7. Who is the real Jesus Christ?

- a. Demonstrate **the humanity of the historical Jesus Christ**:
 - (1) Jesus was in the line of David, King of Israel, and He was born of the virgin Mary. (Matt, 1:1; 1:21-23; Isa.7:14)
 - (2) Jesus Christ **came in the flesh from God.** (John 4:1-3)
 - (3) Jesus Christ is the Word of God and **He became flesh and dwelt among us.** (John 1:1, 14; 2 John 7)
- b. Demonstrate **the deity of Jesus Christ**:
 - (1) Jesus is **the Creator (He is Sovereign).** (Col 1:16; John 1:3; Heb. 1:2, 10)
 - (2) Jesus is of the **Nature of the Godhead.** (John 1:1, 18; 8:56-59; 10:30; 14:11; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3, 8; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 4)
 - (3) Jesus is **the Savior.** (Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:1; Titus 2:13)
 - (4) Jesus **forgave Sins.** (Matt. 9:2-6; Mark 2:5-10; Lk. 5:20-25; Acts 10:43)
 - (5) Jesus Christ **gives Eternal life** (John 5:21; Rom. 6:23; 1 John 5:11-13)
 - (6) Jesus **was worshiped as God.** (Matt. 2:2; John 9:38; Rev. 4:8-11; 5:11-14)

- (7) Jesus is **the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last**. (Rev. 1:8, 11, 17; 2:8)
- (8) Jesus is **Omnipotent**, (all powerful). (Matt. 8:26, 27; John 10:17, 18; Col. 1:17; Rev. 19:6)
- (9) Jesus is **Omniscient**. (all knowing). (Col. 2:2, 3)
- (10) Jesus is **Omnipresent**. (present at all times) (Matt. 28:20; John 8:56-59)
- (11) Jesus is **Truth**. (John 1:14, 17; 14:6)
- (12) **Jesus Christ is righteous**. (2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 2:1)
- (13) Jesus is **the Great Judge**. (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42)
- (14) Jesus is **Immutable**. (Heb. 13:8)
- (15) Jesus is **Love**. (Rom. 8:38, 39; Titus 3:4; 1 John 4:8, 9, 16)

7. What are the major Christian Cults:

(These are described by Walter Martin in his book, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Jan Karel Van Baalen in his book, *The Chaos of the Cults*, and Bob Larson in his book, *Larson's Book of Cults*-(80 cults)

- a. Mormonism
- b. Jehovah's Witnesses
- c. The Catholic Church (not listed in these books of cults)
- d. Christian Science
- e. Worldwide Church of God (Anglo-Israelism; founder: Herbert W. Armstrong)
- f. Unity School of Christianity (The largest gnostic cult in Christendom)
- g. Seventh-day Adventism (?)
- h. Destiny of America
- i. Swedenborgianism (The Church of the New Jerusalem)
- j. Buchmanism (now: Moral Re-Armament)
- k. The Way International
- l. Children of God
- m. The Emerging Church (Rick Warren)
- n. The Bethel Movement (Redding Calif.)
- o. God Calling/Jesus Calling (Sarah Young)
- p. Liberation Theology

8. The term cult is sometimes used to describe religions which do not use the Bible as their basis. These cults are described in depth in the previously mentioned books in point 7 (this list is not exhaustive):

- a. Spiritism (The Cult of Antiquity)
- b. Theosophy (The Theosophical Society)
- c. Zen Buddhism
- d. The Baha'I Faith
- e. Scientology (L. Ron Hubbard)
- f. Transcendental Meditation
- g. Rosicrucian Fellowship
- h. Unification Church (founder: Rev. Sun Myung Moon)
- i. Unitarianism (Unitarian Universalist Association)
- j. Ascended Masters, highly evolved humans in other galaxies (Aliens in UFOs)
- k. Astrology, worship of the stars and other heavenly bodies
- l. Eckankar
- m. Silva Mind Control
- n. New Age
- o. Hare Krishna
- p. Islam
- q. Witchcraft
- r. Freemasonry (Masonic Lodge)