

WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE CULTS

I. CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW THE DEFINITION OF THE TERM “CULT.”

- A. The Word “Cult” Means, “a group of followers having an exaggerated admiration for a person or belief.”
 - 1. The word *cult* does not appear anywhere in the Bible. However, the Bible does use the word “heresy” in Acts 24:14 and 2nd Peter 2:1, which has nearly the same meaning as the word *cult*.
 - 2. The word *heresy* means, “a religious belief opposed to the established teachings of the Bible.”
- B. Cults can Come from Christian Denominations, such as Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc. (Mat 15:9; Acts 15:1, 24; 1 Cor 11:19; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Pet 3:17). Cults usually Start when They Emphasize one Doctrine at the Expense of other Doctrines.
- C. The two most common Teachings that Cults Emphasize Are the End of the World and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:10-12; Mat 24:1-51).
- D. Many People from Christian Denominations Who have become Disappointed in Their Churches often become Members of a Cult because They Are Attracted to Them by Their Enthusiasm and Dedication to God.
- E. Cults Distort biblical Truths into perverted Lies and often Use as much as ninety percent Truth to Deceive Their Followers (2 Pet 2:1-2; Rom 16:17-18).
- F. Cults Claim to Be “True Christians,” but They either Have another Jesus, another Spirit or another Gospel (2 Cor 11:3-4; Gal 1:8-9).
- G. A Member of a Cult may Be Saved in Spite of (regardless of) His present false Beliefs, but not because of His false Beliefs.
 - 1. He may have been saved before he became a cult member.
 - 2. He may have come to know the truth by himself and gotten saved even while he was a cult member.

II. CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW THE IMPORTANT BIBLE WARNINGS CONCERNING THE CULTS.

- A. Believers Are Warned in the Bible that Cult Members Are “wolves in sheep’s clothing” (Mat 7:15-20).

- B. Believers Are Warned that Cult Members may Come from either inside of or outside of true Christianity (Acts 20:29-31; 1 Tim 4:1-2; 3 John vs.9-10).
- C. Believers Are Warned that Cult Members will Use any Means They Can to Deceive Others (Col 2:8, 18; 1 Tim 6:20-21).
- D. Believers Are Warned that Cult Members neither Accept nor Believe that the Bible Is the final Authority for all Teachings (Mat 22:29; John 5:45-47; Mark 7:9; Eph 4:30a).

III. CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW THE MAJOR ERRORS THAT IDENTIFY THE CULTS.

- A. Cults usually Claim for Their Authority some Revelation other than the clear Statements of the Bible. They increasingly Promote the Teachings and Traditions of Their Leader or Group over those of the Bible and Jesus Christ (Mat 15:1-9; 22:29; 2 Tim 2:15; Rev 2:1-6).
 1. But the Bible says to beware of the philosophy, deceit (trickery) and tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world (the way lost people look at things) (Col 2:8).
 2. But the Bible says that tradition is acceptable as long as it does not contradict the commands of God (2 Thes 3:6; Mark 7:5-13).
 3. But the Bible says there is only one gospel for this dispensation (the Church Age) (Gal 1:6-9; 1 Cor 1:17-18; 15:1-4).
 4. But the Bible says that saving faith comes only from hearing the word of God (Eph 2:8-9; Rom 10:17).
 5. But the Bible says that there is no need for further written revelation other than the Bible itself (Deu 4:2; Pro 30:5-6; Rev 22:18-19).
- B. Cults usually Hide the Truth about what They really Believe concerning Salvation. At first They Say that Salvation Is by Grace through Faith, then later They Offer It by Something other than Faith in the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1-4). They Offer a Salvation Based on One's own Works of Righteousness (doing something to earn salvation; to get saved).
 1. But the Bible says that a believer in the present Church Age is "saved" by faith alone (Acts 16:30-31; Eph 2:8-9) and not by works of righteousness (good deeds or works) (Tit 3:5; Rom 4:4-5).
 2. But the Bible says that a Church Age Christian is "justified" (made legally free from the penalty of sin and made acceptable to God) by faith (Rom 5:1, 9; 4:24-25) and not by keeping the commandments (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; 3:11). But the Bible says that a Church Age Christian is made "righteous" by faith in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 3:22; 4:5; 10:1-4).

- C. Cults usually Do not Offer a sure Salvation because of the Way They Interpret (explain) the Bible.
1. But the Bible says that a Christian can know for sure that he has eternal life **now** (John 20:31; 1 John 2:25; 5:9-13).
 2. But the Bible says that a Christian is sealed until Jesus Christ returns for him (Eph 1:13; 4:30).
 3. But the Bible says that a Christian is kept by God's power (1 Pet 1:3-5; 2 Tim 1:12).
 4. But the Bible says that a Christian is preserved and kept from falling (losing his salvation) (Jude vs.1, 24).
 5. But the Bible says that a Christian cannot be separated by anything from the love of God (Rom 8:35-39).
- D. Cults often Promote either a Person or His Teachings to a Level of Authority Equal to Jesus Christ or the Bible. Some of Their Leaders Claim to Have a special Relationship with God and to Be the only Source of God's Truth for Today. Other Leaders Convince Their Followers that They Cannot Know God's Truth except through the Leader Himself.
1. But in the Bible, Jesus Christ said that no spiritual leader is to be promoted to a position equal to or above God (Mat 23:1-12).
 - a. John the Baptist, the greatest prophet that ever lived (Luke 7:22-28), denied promotion and honor (John 1:19-23; 3:26-30).
 - b. The Apostle Peter denies honor from men in Acts 10:25-26.
 - c. Even an angel denied honor from men in Revelation 22:8-9.
 2. But the Bible says that Christians are to give Jesus Christ the honor and glory, and not themselves (John 7:18; 5:23; 1 Cor 3:5-11).
 3. But the Bible says that no one is absolutely necessary as the source of God's truth in a Christian's life except Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 4:14-16; John 14:16-17, 26; 1 Cor 2:12-14).
- E. Cults often Change Their Teachings in order to Keep Their Position of Authority. Many Times They Use common Christian Terms, but They Give different Meanings to Them.
1. But the Bible says that Christians should check the Scriptures to see if someone's teachings are true or not (Acts 17:11; Mat 22:29).
 2. But the Bible says that Christian teachers should not have double standards (saying one thing in public and another in private) (Acts 20:20).
 3. But the Bible says that Christians should be on guard for changes in Bible teachings (2 Tim 4:3-4; 2 Pet 2:1-3).
 4. But in the Bible, Jesus Christ says that the meaning of every word in the Scriptures is very important (Mat 4:4).

- F. Cults Claim that the Bible Is not always to Be Taken literally because It Is full of Allegories that Complicate the plain literal Meaning. They then Make Themselves the final Authority in Determining whether a certain Bible Teaching Is to Be Taken literally or allegorically. When Cults Decide that It Is an “Allegory” (or a fable), They Determine what the Interpretation (meaning) of the *Allegory* Is for Their Members.
1. An *allegory* is a story where people, things and happenings have another meaning.
 2. There is only one allegory mentioned in the Bible, found in Galatians 4:21-31. The interpretation of this *allegory* is given in the Bible Itself (Gal 4:24). The Holy Spirit is the one who interprets the Bible and not men (1 Cor 2:12-14; 2 Pet 1:20).
 3. The Bible says that there will be false teachers who will lead some believers away from true Bible teaching (2 Pet 2:1-3; Gal 1:6-8).
 4. The Bible says that true teachers make the word of God the final authority (Gal 4:30a).
 5. The Bible says that the word of God is written in plain language and not in allegories (Hab 2:2).
- G. Most Cults Deny the Deity (godhood) of Jesus Christ, or the Deity of the Holy Ghost, or the Trinity.
1. But the Bible says that Jesus Christ is God manifest (revealed) in the flesh (John 20:26-28; Mat 1:23; 1 John 5:20; 1 Tim 3:16).
 2. But the Bible says that the Holy Ghost is God (Acts 5:3-4; Psa 95:7-11; Heb 3:7-11).
 3. But the Bible says that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost are One God (Mat 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pet 1:2; 1 John 5:7).
 - a. All three are “Eternal.”
 - 1) The Father (Deu 33:27).
 - 2) The Son (1 John 5:20).
 - 3) The Holy Spirit (Heb 9:14).
 - b. All three are called both “Lord” and “God.”
 - 1) The Father (Mat 11:25; Exo 6:7).
 - 2) The Son (Acts 2:36; Rom 10:9; John 20:28).
 - 3) The Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:17; Acts 5:3-4; Eph 2:22).
 - c. All three are called “Creator.”
 - 1) The Father (Gen 1:1-2; Isa 42:5; 45:18; Acts 17:24).
 - 2) The Son (John 1:1-3, 14-17; Col 1:12-17; Heb 1:2).
 - 3) The Holy Spirit (Job 26:13; 33:4).
 - d. All three are called “Comforter.”
 - 1) The Father (Isa 51:3, 12; 2 Cor 1:3-4; 7:6).
 - 2) The Son (John 14:18; 2 Thes 2:16-17).
 - 3) The Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18, 26).
 - e. All three raised Jesus Christ from the dead.
 - 1) The Father (Acts 3:26; 4:10; 1 Thes 1:9-10).
 - 2) The Son (John 2:19-21; 10:7, 11, 14-18).

- 3) The Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11).
- f. All three dwell in the believer.
 - 1) The Father (1 John 4:15; 2 Cor 6:16).
 - 2) The Son (Eph 3:17; Gal 2:20).
 - 3) The Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Tim 1:14).
- H. Cults Are Able to Teach Falsehoods through Bible Studies because People seldom Read or Study the Bible as They should (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 2:15).
1. Cults interpret the Bible in their own particular way (2 Pet 3:15-16).
 2. Cults usually pay little attention to the text (to whom the verses are speaking) (1 Cor 10:32), the context (what the verses are speaking about) or to rightly dividing the Bible by dispensations. Dispensations are, “periods of time when God deals with men in different ways.” God dealt with men in the Old Testament differently than He deals with men in the New Testament, the present Church Age.
 3. Cults often do not allow their members to read any material by writers outside of their own group.
 4. Some cults teach “baptismal regeneration” in the Church Age by saying that a person is saved when he is baptized in water. This is often done by taking Acts 2:38 out of its context, which is addressed to Jews who have recently rejected their Messiah (Acts 2:36-40).
 5. Cults often use Old Testament passages to teach New Testament doctrine. Some of them use Exodus 20:8-11 to teach that Church Age Believers must keep the Sabbath.
 - a. But the Bible says that New Testament Believers do not have to keep the Sabbath (Rom 14:5-6; Col 2:16).
 - b. But the Bible says that the Old Testament was written for the Christian to learn from the lives of Old Testament Saints (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:1-11).
 6. Cults do not separate between the teachings that affect someone’s salvation (his standing) and teachings that affect someone’s fellowship (his state) with God (1 John 1:3-7).
- I. Cults Encourage Their Members to Withdraw from the rest of Society and Develop a Feeling of Group Identity and Family. This Separation usually Results in total Isolation. This Is Done to Unite Their Members against the outside World, to Cut Them off from other Sources of Information and to Develop a Sense of Dependence on Their Leaders or Their Organization.
1. But the Bible says that Jesus Christ never totally isolated Himself from the rest of the world (Mat 9:10-11; Luke 8:38-39).
 2. But the Bible says that the Apostles were not supposed to isolate themselves from the rest of the world (Mat 28:19; Gal 2:11-14).

- J. The Unity of the Cults Is usually Centered in a human Leader or Founder and not in God, Jesus Christ or the Bible. These Leaders often Claim to Speak for God, or Jesus Christ, and then Place Themselves above Question to the Point where They Have total Authority (control). The Claim to Authority of These Leaders usually Is Based on the Belief that the Rest of Society Is Under Satan's Control.
1. But the Bible says that believers should follow a leader as long as his authority is the Bible (Mat 22:29; 1 Cor 11:1; Acts 17:11; Gal 4:30a).
 2. But the Bible says that believers are not to be under the total control of any man (Mat 23:1-12), or any religious system (Gal 3:1-3; 5:1), nor are they to put other believers under their own control (1 Pet 5:1-3; 3 John vs.9-10).
- K. Cults slowly Replace the Thoughts, Feelings and Choices of Their Members with those of the Cult's; This Is Known as Brainwashing. Their Members' View of the Truth Is Changed from what Is Right to what Is in the best Interest of the Group (cult). They Develop a Fear in Their Members that Leaving the Group will Result in either the Loss of eternal Life or the Loss of Rewards, and sometimes both.
1. But the Bible warns believers that people who do not accept what the Bible says will accept the false teachings of the cults as truth (2 Thes 2:7-12).
 2. But the Bible says that the Holy Ghost, and not men, will teach and lead believers into all truth (John 14:26; 1 Cor 2:9-15; 1 John 2:26-27).
 3. But the Bible says that eternal life and rewards are not based on one being a member of any group (1 John 2:22-25; 5:11-13; Mark 9:38-40; 1 Cor 3:8-15).
- L. Cults Believe that God Has Raised Them up to Do what Others have Failed to Do, thereby Causing Divisions. They often verbally Attack Anyone Who Does not Believe the Way They Do and Accuse Others of either Being Ignorant of the Truth or of Being Controlled by Satan.
1. But the Bible says that there should not be divisions but unity among believers (1 Cor 1:10).
 2. But the Bible says that disagreement between believers does not necessarily mean that they are teaching differently (compare Acts 15:35-41 with 2 Tim 4:11 and compare Gal 2:11-13 with 2 Pet 3:15-16).
 3. But the Bible says that divisions are caused by those spreading doubt (Rom 16:17-18).
- M. Cults Present Themselves as Being Christian. This Is often Done by Using Terms Known by most Christians, but Giving Their Own Meanings to These Terms.
1. But the Bible says that believers should not be deceived by those who **claim** to be Christian leaders (Eph 4:14; 2 Cor 11:13-15; Rev 2:2).

2. But the Bible says not to accept those who **claim** to be Christians without first making sure their claims line up with the Bible (Acts 17:11; Gal 1:6-9; 2 Thes 3:14).

IV. CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW THE FIVE STEPS NEEDED TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM THE ERRORS OF THE CULTS.

- A. The **First Step** Is for Christians to Read and Study the Bible for Themselves in order to Understand basic Christian Doctrine (teaching).
 1. They should make it their goal to read the whole Bible **at least** once every three years, one chapter a day (Isa 34:16a). False teachings are accepted as the truth because most people do not even know what the Bible actually says (Mat 22:29).
 2. They should make reading the Bible a lifetime commitment (Deu 17:18-19; Acts 17:11).
 3. They should study the Bible to learn basic teachings (1 Pet 2:2; 1 Cor 3:1-3) before going on to deeper learning (Heb 5:11 to 6:3).
 4. They should trust that the Holy Spirit will teach (guide) them as they study the Bible, either alone (John 14:26; 1 Cor 2:10-13) or with Christian teachers (2 Tim 2:2; Eph 4:11-14).
 5. They should make the Bible their final authority (Acts 17:11; Gal 4:30a).
- B. The **Second Step** Is for Christians not to Be close Friends with Cult Members by not Attending Their Meetings and not Spending a lot of Time with Them.
 1. Christians should try to win cult members to Jesus Christ instead of attending their meetings and becoming close friends with them (2 Cor 6:14-17; 2 Thes 3:6).
 2. Christians should not waste a lot of time trying to witness to a cult member when he could use that time to witness to other lost people (Tit 3:9-11).
- C. The **Third Step** Is for Christians to Refuse Points of View that Contradict (go against) the Bible.
 1. They should avoid those who cause arguments by using philosophy (Col 2:8), science (1 Tim 6:20) or tradition (Mark 7:1-13) that contradict the Bible.
 2. They should reject those who teach false Bible doctrine (teaching) (1 Tim 6:3-5; 2 Tim 4:3-4; 2 Pet 2:1-3).
- D. The **Fourth Step** Is for Christians to Study the Word of God so that They will Know when the Cults Are not Teaching correct Bible Doctrine (Gal 1:8-10) and to Enable Them to Show the Cults where They Are Wrong.
 1. They should study the Bible (2 Tim 2:15) to learn its proper divisions (dispensations, covenants, resurrections, baptisms, judgments, kingdoms, mysteries, etc.).

2. They should study the Bible to determine how to properly apply the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15-17).
 - a. Every verse in the Bible is directed (aimed) at either the Jews, or the Gentiles or the Christians (1 Cor 10:32).
 - b. Every verse in the Bible can be used personally in everyday life.
 - 1) It can be used for **salvation** (Rom 10:17; 1 Pet 1:23).
 - 2) It can be used for **inspiration** (Job 32:8).
 - 3) It can be used for **doctrine** (indoctrination), to give commands to live by (see Isa 28:9-10 & contr. Mat 15:9).
 - 4) It can be used for **reproof** (admonition), to scold someone for doing something that he knows he should not be doing (Eph 5:11).
 - 5) It can be used for **correction**, to inform someone that something he is doing is wrong (see Acts 18:24-26 & contr. Zep 3:2).
 - 6) It can be used for **instruction**, to teach someone the right way to do things (2 Chr 3:3; Pro 4:1-5).
 - 7) It can be used for **perfection** (preparation), to enable someone to do good works (Eph 2:10).
- E. The **Fifth Step** Is for Christians not to Encourage the Cults in any Way.
1. They should *not* give the cults any money or accept any materials from them (like books, magazine, tracts, etc.).
 2. They should *not* recognize any cult as being just another “Christian” organization.