

## WHAT IS A CULT?

This study will serve as brief introduction to cults.

After the May 26<sup>th</sup> discussion by Brother Gables on Family Radio & Harold Camping, Brother David asked, “What is a cult?”

So, “What is a Cult?”

Dictionary: A system of religion or group that deviates from the norm.

Who defines the “norm”?

Every sincere religious person believes that their set of beliefs is correct and if you disagree with them then you are at best, in error or, worst a cult.

Christianity was a “cult” to First Century Judaism.

The Protestants were a “cult” to the Roman Catholic Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

Then for historic Baptists, what is a cult?

To me, the Westboro Baptist of Topeka, Kansas is a cult.

The Westboro Baptists are known for their protesting at military funerals because to them God hates America because of America’s pro-homosexual agenda.

If you want to be better informed on cults my suggestion is that you read several books on the subject.

Know The Marks of Cults, by David Breese

A Guide to Cults & New Religions, by Ronald Enroth

The Mind Benders, by Jack Sparks

The Kingdom of the Cults, by Walter Martin

One of the best resources online is Watchman Fellowship of Alabama. They also offer a print version of their Notebook Profile of major cults. They profile over one hundred cults.

Before we zero in on what constitutes a cult, let's name some cults:

Moonies-Unification Church

Jehovah's Witness

Mormons- does it shock anyone, aren't they Christians?

Transcendental Meditation

Jim Jones ["drink the Kool- Aid"]

Hare Krishna

Ophra Winfrey [New Age]

Family Radio, Harold Camping

Personalities that take on a cult-like following:

Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Michael Jackson, et al. were virtually worshipped?

Current idol: Justin Beiber

[I didn't know who he was either until my six-year old great granddaughter introduced him to me.]

One of the characteristics of most cults is their denial of the deity of Jesus Christ. In effect, they offer peace without Christ.

#### **1 John 4:1-3**

**Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup> By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.**

**NKJV**

If a particular cult does not deny the deity of Jesus Christ they otherwise devalue His Person.

## A few examples of the views of Jesus:

### Mormons

The “Jesus” of the Mormons is the spirit offspring of God the Father and Mary, the Heavenly Mother. The Holy Ghost is also a spiritual offspring and a “brother” of Jesus.

God the Father was a man who became God.

The Mormons deny the Trinity, One God in three Persons, and teach that there are three gods.

### Jehovah’s Witness

Jesus is the first created being.

Jesus’ resurrection was “spiritual” and not bodily.

### Christian Science

Jesus is the human man and Christ is the divine idea.

Christian Science is neither Christian nor scientific.

How do we define a cult?

What are some tests of a cult?

(Source: The Kingdom of the Cults, Walter Martin)

1. Extra-Biblical Authority.

Christian Science is based on the writings of Mary Baker Eddy.

Book of Mormon interprets the Bible.

What about the Roman Catholic Church?

Church tradition trumps the Scriptures.

## 2. Denial of Justification by Grace through Faith Alone

The Two Religions in the World - Grace and Works

## 3. Devaluation of Jesus as the Christ and a denial of His deity.

## 4. The Group as the Exclusive Community of the Saved

As Christians we must preach that faith in the sufficiency of the righteousness of Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved. But within the community of the Christian faith, we must allow that there are many expressions of Christianity that are acceptable to God. The issue is when a certain group claims that you must belong to their fellowship in order to be saved.

Besides the cults mentioned earlier, others who claim exclusiveness:

Roman Catholicism; Landmark Baptists; Church of Christ.

## 5. The Group's Central Role in Eschatology

Jehovah's Witness and the 144,000  
Harold Camping

Now a word of warning about one of the most dangerous movements loose in the world today. While New Age may not technically be a cult since there is no focus of leadership and commitment to a specific group it still holds sway over the minds of far too many people.

### New Age Movement

Are you a fan of Oprah Winfrey?

Then you are being taught New Age.

Oprah Winfrey is the queen of New Age.

She has given up her TV show but I'll assure you she will not go away.

New Age is basically Hinduism expressed in Western terminology with enough "God-words" thrown in to deceive the person who doesn't know or care what the Bible teaches.

A few years back now there was Shirley MacLaine's, Out On A Limb  
A book and a movie.

The main scene of the movie was where Shirley and her guru are on the beach and she has the realization that she is "god" because everything is "god." [pantheism]

How old is New Age?

It all began in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:1-5

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"

<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; <sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Basic tenets of New Age:

No death [reincarnation]

Everything is god, therefore you are gods [pantheism]

Karma

Knowledge is strength; you determine your own "truth".

Therefore there is no objective truth; no right and wrong.

Evolution instead of creation.

Questions?

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