"HOW TO IDENTIFY A CULT"

INTRODUCTION:

***Know the marks of a cult!**

I.Cults Preach Another <u>JESUS</u> (II Cor. 11:3-4)
(They deny Christ's person and work)

A.They deny His <u>Person</u> (I Jn. 4:1-6; II Jn. 7-11)

B.They deny His <u>Work</u> (Gal. 2:4, 21, 6:14 cp. Heb. 10:14)

II.Cults Believe Another <u>AUTHORITY</u>
(They undermine the Bible)

A.New revelations (Deut. 13:1-5, 18:20-22)

B.The traditions of men (Mt. 15:9, 13-14)

C.Faulty Interpretation (II Pet. 3:16; II Tim. 2:14-18)

III.Cults Teach Another <u>GOSPEL</u> (Gal. 1:6-10)
(They peddle a works salvation)

***Legalism - Col. 2:8, 16-23; I Tim. 4:1-3**

IV.Cults Follow Another <u>LEADER</u> (Mt. 20:25-27)
(They are devoted to a man)

V.Cults Utilize Another <u>MOTIVE</u>
(They manipulate by fear and intimidation)

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"THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTS"

INTRODUCTION:

A series of messages on the cults is appropriate (fitting) in light of world events and the warning of Jesus concerning the last days (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24) (Lk. 21:8; Mk. 13:21-22)

Cults thrive in a societal climate where people have the following problems:

Loneliness - They "approach the unwary with an excessively friendly invitation to a lecture, free meal, weekend workshop, or other activity offering instant solutions to overwhelming problems (most often without identifying themselves) (Bob Larson, Cults, p.15)

They then, offer a "family" and employ a "love-bombing" technique to people who are longing for acceptance, approval, and a belonging relationship.

Indecision - They thrive on people who are totally dependent on strong leadership

Disappointment - With organized religion and denominations that had a form of religion but did not meet the people's inner-most needs. The bitter taste of dead orthodoxy created a thirst for fresh enthusiasm and a new spiritual experience.

Mental & emotional disorders -People who lack the ability to think rationally, and analytically are prime victims.

Doctrinal confusion -The cult will offer dogmatic answers

Pride -They believe God has raised them up to accomplish what others have failed to do. Their vision is to recover the lost purpose of the "apostate" church. With exclusivistic arrogance they delude themselves into thinking that they alone have been entrusted with the truth. The opportunity to be a part of a select group of God's chosen servants is attractive.

Beware: Cults are seductive!

1.They <u>look</u> good - Mt. 7:15; II Cor. 11:13-14)

II Tim. 3:1, 5 - "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. . . Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

II Pet. 2:1, 17-19 - ""But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction. . . These are wells without water, [The thirsty world goes to them to drink, but they do not satisfy.] clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

2.They <u>sound</u> good - Rom. 16:17-18

3.They minister in the "name of Jesus" - Mt. 7:22-23

(The cultist will be zealous, confident, claim to be sole repositories of truth, and apparently "religious")

"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully" (Jer. 48:10).

What Satan says is false; therefore, God's people must be able to detect error. Satan's co-workers are:

<u>F</u> ake
<u>A</u> ppealing
<u>L</u> iars
<u>S</u> eductive
<u>E</u> nticing

God gave you a pastor (Eph. 4:11-12) to equip you so that you will not sway in the winds of Satan's false teachings (Eph.4:14)

What is a religious cult?

Definition:*A religious cult is a unified, organized group of people who differ significantly from Biblical Christianity; rally around and dogmatically support a man or the unquestioned teachings of a man or men; claim sole possession of the truth; either deny cardinal doctrines of*

Scripture and/or twist Scripture to make minor issues major dogma and dividing issues; emphasizes external conformity to man made rules; erodes Christian liberty & individuality; and promotes an arrogant, exclusivistic, isolationist, spirit.

What is a Cult in simple terms?

In a nutshell, the definition of a cult can be summarized by a concise *"mathematical"* formula:

"A cult is any religious group which:

(+)ADDS to the Scriptures
(-)SUBTRACTS from Christ
(x)MULTIPLIES salvation requirements
(÷)DIVIDES the church"

(Author unknown)

*Know the marks of a cult!

I.Cults Preach Another JESUS (II Cor. 11:3-4)
(They deny Christ's person and work)

"Unethical businesses often advertise low-priced products to get consumers in the door. Once in, customers are subjected to manipulative sales tactics designed to get them to leave with something other than what they came in for. This "bait and switch" tactic is also characteristic of dangerous religious groups" (Martin R. De Haan II, "How to identify a dangerous religious group", Radio Bible Class, p.16)

Cults will preach about Jesus; but not the Jesus of the Bible. They will use much Biblical terminology but slip in gross errors about the nature of Christ or redefine their terminology so that the result is heresy.

A.They deny His Person (I Jn. 4:1-6; II Jn. 7-11)

His deity is explained away.

B.They deny His Work (Gal. 2:4, 21, 6:14 cp. Heb. 10:14)

His atonement is minimized.

The efficacy of the cross is nullified.

II.Cults Believe Another AUTHORITY
(They undermine the Bible)

The cult, its leaders, and its doctrine are the authority-- claim of "special discoveries"--"You need us to know the 'real' truth."

False authorities added to Holy Scripture:

Jehovah's Witnesses: The Writings of Charles T. Russell and Joseph F. Rutherford

Mormons: The Doctrines and Covenants; The Pearl of a Great Price; The Book of Mormon

Christian Science: Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures

Seventh Day Adventists: The Writings of Ellen G. White

Unification Church: The Writings of Moon

Roman Catholic Church: The decrees of the Vatican

God warns about adding or deleting from His Word -

Rev. 22:18-19

Dt. 4:2, 12:32 - "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. . . What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

Prov. 30:6 - "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

Titus 1:14 - "Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth."

A.New revelations (Deut. 13:1-5, 18:20-22)

Ex. Joseph Smith - Book of Mormon

Charles T. Russell - dimensions of pyramids gave him the date 1914 for the return of Christ

B.The traditions of men (Mt. 15:8-9, 13-14)

They show a "token" respect for the Bible.

Independent research is not encouraged; rather it's often discouraged!

They appeal much to reason, logic, "good sense," rather than the clear statements of Scripture.

C.Faulty Interpretation (II Pet. 3:16; II Tim. 2:14-18)

Acts 20:29-30 - "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

***They allegorize the Bible - EX: II Tim. 2:14-18.**

Hymenaeus and Philetus allegorized the Resurrection.

Gnostics taught that a "spiritual" resurrection occurred at baptism or when one was cognizant of truth.

***They segment the Bible - they build doctrine on proof text without context.**
(They explain away everything that contradicts their presupposed system of doctrine)

In all cults, critical thinking is discouraged. Questioning the cults dogma is anathema. In order to manipulate the minds of the members or inquirers many cult coercion techniques are used to neutralize the person's mind and to begin an period of intensive indoctrination: (See Larson, p. 16-18 for a list)

III.Cults Teach Another GOSPEL (Gal. 1:6-10)
(They peddle a works salvation)
(Not the Gospel of grace)

Salvation to a cult is inseparably linked to your faithfulness and membership in their "church." They are the only true "church."

***Legalism - Col. 2:8, 16-23; I Tim. 4:1-3**

A religious cult will major on a peculiar set of "doctrinal insights" which no other group has been privy to, thus instilling a "we" verses "they" complex.

"In a society that is biblically illiterate, the deception of a cult is particularly enticing if it claims to have "restored" certain truths that have been lost or undiscovered." (Bob Larson, Cults p. 15)

They major on the minors and minor on the majors.

Salvation to a Christian Scientist is in ridding the mind of the error that there is anything from which to be saved.

IV.Cults Follow Another LEADER (Mt. 20:25-27)
(They are devoted to a man)
(Not the Lord Jesus Christ)

Herbert W. Armstrong - The World Today
Victor Paul Wierwille - The Way
Russell T. Rutherford - J.W.'s
Joseph Smith/Brigham Young - Mormon
Mary Baker Eddy - Christian Science
The Pope - R.C.C.

"In the beginning many groups (may) display sincere expressions of a humble desire to better society and follow God's will. At some point the founder's teachings are codified into an organized system of revelational authority. Allegiance to the founder's ideals becomes an absolute requirement...What then develops is a "type of institutional dogmatism and a pronounced intolerance for any position but their own" (Bob Larson citing Walter Martin, p.15)

Their leaders demand total allegiance and dedication to their cause. People become a slave to the cult, not to Christ.

In doing so they lay heavy burdens on people (Mt. 23:3-4, 13).

Their human leaders represent God, and their word must not be violated.

Their human leaders are the final authority. All alternative views are denounced as Satanic counterfeits.

They are super organizers. The less truth, the more necessary to be highly organized.

All cults have in common a "centralized authority" that tightly structures both philosophy and life-style" (Larson, p.14)

How do you detect a false spiritual leader? (See Dehaan, p.9-10)

V.Cults Utilize Another MOTIVE
(They manipulate by fear and intimidation)
(Not love for Christ)

1.The fear of man

Cp. the often repeated phrase - "For fear of the Jews"

Since "salvation" is tied to one's relationship to the cult, to leave the cult is in the minds of many, to leave Christ, the Bible, & Eternal life.

2.The praise of man

The motivation for many cult members is generated be rewards for excessive zeal.

3.The love of money & success

The motivation of all cult leaders is not love for Christ, but is to have more of the 3 B's:

Bodies,Buildings, and Bucks.

Financial exploitation - I Tim. 6:5

CONCLUSION:

In all cults:

C hrist is dethroned
U nity is forced
L aws become salvation
T ruth is twisted
S criptures are nullified

What is Satan's goal for his cults to accomplish? Answer: To turn men away from the truth (Ex: Elymas - Acts 13:6-11)

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Disappointment
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Pride

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