

Is The Church Of Christ A Cult? #2

In our previous article, we discussed the definition and characteristic of cults. From this examination, we saw that the Lord's church, properly followed in the New Testament, cannot truly be a cult. Having established that fact, we are going to see why people join cults and what we can do to help someone who is in a cult.

Why Do People Join Cults?

John said, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (1 John 4:1). People are definitely believing "other spirits" in the world, and it is a common belief that people who join cults are uneducated and mentally unstable. However, approximately 60% of cult members have attended college, and 75% are mentally healthy. There are several characteristics that can make a person more vulnerable to being drawn into a cult.

First, low self-esteem. A person who has low self-esteem can be susceptible to the manipulation techniques used by cults. One ought not to think of himself too highly (Romans 12:3), but one must also remember they that are important enough for Christ to die for them (John 3:16). Second, curiosity. If someone, particularly a teenager, has led a sheltered life and never been allowed to make their own decisions, they are likely to join a cult out of curiosity. The Bible is not for curiosity. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*" Every decision to obey must be made out of a realization that one is a sinner and in need of the blood of Jesus. Third, rebellion. An individual who has always been "babied" during their life may feel the need to rebel against parents, friends, etc. Sadly, a rebellious spirit can tempt people to put their faith in a man or woman, not in the word of God (Acts 4:19; 5:29; Romans 3:4).

Fourth, going through a difficult time. Many of life's transitions make people susceptible to joining cults. These transitions may include a relationship break-up, divorce, death, moving, changing schools, etc. It is at these times that people feel lonely, and therefore turn to cults for support and a "sense of belonging." The Bible is able to provide comfort and peace, and the fellowship of the saints can also help immensely with personal tragedy (Philippians 4:6-7; Acts 12:5, 12). Fifth, lack of strong morals or values. Those who lack morals cannot see the demeaning nature of cults and are not moved with indignation against the deception they use. The Bible defines

values and morals, but not with coercion or compulsion, that makes us better if we follow those righteous precepts (Galatians 5:19-23; Ephesians 4:17-32; Colossians 3:5-17). Sixth, lack of Bible knowledge. Some newscasters insinuated that people in Waco had too much knowledge of the Bible, but nothing could be further from the truth. If they had known the Bible, they would not fellowshiped a fornicator (1 Corinthians 5:9), worshiped him as the Christ (1 Timothy 2:5-6), and they would have been more diligent to look for the church found in the New Testament (Acts 2:42-47).

Cults have permeated our culture and seem to have become the latest remedy for religious confusion. Whether cults are big or small, famous or unknown, many are dangerous. They hurt many more than the people directly involved, and perhaps leave physical as well as emotional scars for life.

What Can I Do To Help Someone In A Cult?

Above all else, Christians must realize that most cults believe that they have freed their adherents from religious exploitation which they almost always accuse Christians of practicing. In this connection, it is vital to demonstrate genuine interest in the cultist as a person for the sake of himself and his redemption. The Lord said, *"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost"* (Luke 15:4-6). A Christian who indicates that they are unprejudiced, reasonably learned, and possessed of a genuine love for the welfare of the cult member can have a devastating effect upon the conditioning apparatus of the cult (cf. Ephesians 5:2). *"Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man"* (Colossians 4:6). If you lack the wisdom to speak to someone in this situation, then go to God in prayer (James 1:5).

However, one must exercise caution. For instance, when dealing with the average Jehovah's Witness the entire pattern of preconditioning must be understood so that the Christian can avoid, where possible, direct usage of terms that will almost certainly evoke a conditioned reflex and sever the lines of communication. The hold of a cult on a person is a very real mental and emotional chain which has a strong hold on the cult member's ability to discern truth from error. It will take tremendous patience to break through what they have learned.

The bottom line is, there is no valid evidence to prove that churches of Christ are cults. What is the motivation for individuals saying that the church of Christ is a cult? Their motivation is that they do not like the church of Christ and they do not want others to listen to the preaching of the gospel. They therefore make up names and doctrines and ascribe them to the church as "straw-men" in an effort to dissuade as many as possible from listening to faithful preachers, teachers, elders, and members. Is this the way a true Christian behaves? True Christians have nothing to fear from those who are faithfully teaching the Bible.

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