

## **Comparative Religions**

### How to Respond to Cults

“A cult is a religious perversion. It is a belief and practice in the world of religion which calls for devotion to a religious view or leader centered in false doctrine. It is an organized heresy.”

- Dave Breese  
(Know the Marks of Cults)

“By the term ‘cult’ I mean nothing derogatory to any group so classified. A cult, as I define it, is any religious group which differs significantly religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture.”

- Dr. Charles Braden  
(These Also Believe)

“I may add to this that a cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person’s interpretation of the Bible.”

- Walter Martin  
(The Kingdom of Cults)

“A cult takes its point of departure from the religious thought of a major religion, but twists and warps that pattern of faith until it has become something essentially new and different from what it was originally.”

- Hubert F. Beck  
(How to Respond to Cults)

What is the definition of a cult?

### **General Characteristics of Cults:**

1. The doctrine of the last days and last things
- 2.
3. Special revelations
- 4.
5. Most cults are very dogmatic
6. A form of double-talk
7. A complete lack of interest in logical consistency
- 8.
9. The concept of sin is frequently minimized or totally absent
- 10.
11. Cults also insist on a highly disciplined framework of thought and life
12. Highly compartmentalized lives
- 13.

### **Reasons for the surge of cults in today's society**

1. Cultural Factors
  - a. The dominance of feeling over intellect
  - b. The mood of relativity
  - c.
  - d. The rise of leisure time
  - e. The authority-freedom struggle
2. Religious Factors
  - a. Shallow religious understandings
  - b.
  - c.

### **Understanding the Cults**

1. Cults generally spring up around a powerful and overwhelming personality

2. A cult usually represents a heresy of some mainstream religion
3. Writings that convey the understanding of cult leaders
4. Cults require strong commitment to authority
5. Cults emphasize evangelism
6. The vicious cycle of cults:

Deep commitment

More

Avoidance of exposure to  
alternatives (no introspection)

A "shunning" of the ways  
Of the world

### **Resemblances between Cults and Christianity**

- The early Church was perceived as a cult of \_\_\_\_\_.
- The Church looks as strange to the world as cults look to the Church.

Cults	Christianity
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First originated with one person

Creation of authority and preservation of the teachings of that leader

Withdrawal from the world – secret meetings and inner secrets until one becomes a member

Emphasis on community

Emphasis on Evangelism

Rumors about "weird" activities

Stress on orthodoxy

How can we "judge" the cults?

Why go against the cults? Don't we have the same goal; that is, to benefit mankind?

### **Distinguishing Characteristics of the Church**

1. Proper use of scripture
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ has authority for teaching and doctrine
  - b. Methods and principles used in interpretation have survived over the centuries
  - c. Common understandings of Scripture are confessed through Ecumenical Creeds and Confessions where Universal Truths are acknowledged in the midst of denominational differences
  - d. Themes, motifs, and broad backgrounds of understanding which are built into Scripture are emphasized.

\_\_\_\_\_ – \_\_\_\_\_ – \_\_\_\_\_

Goal – Malady – Gospel

“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

2. Proper Administration of the Sacraments  
“Without the Word of God, the water is simple water and no baptism.”  
The purpose of the sacraments is to strengthen the faith of the living.

### **What can we learn from the cults?**

1. The proper use of authority
2. The nature of doubts and questioning (cults do not allow doubts.)
3. Commitment and dedication
4. Sound Biblical study and knowledge
5. The place of doctrine in the Church
6. A sense of community
7. Experience coupled with knowledge
8. Evangelism

### **Attitudes to be Encouraged Toward Cults**

1. Some Don'ts

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

2. Some Do's

a.

b.

c.

d.

1 Peter 3:15b says what: