



# Cherrequine Bible Doctrine Ministries

## Cults 101

### What is a Cult?

The term cult comes from the Latin word *cultus*, which is a form of the verb *colere*, meaning "to worship or give reverence to a deity." Cultus was a general word for worship, regardless of a particular god in question. The Vulgate Bible, uses the word in the general sense of worship, regardless of the deity in view (e.g., Acts 17:23, 25). The term is also used in Christian Latin texts that speak of the worship of the one true God. It is understandable, then that the word cult would naturally be applied to any particular religious group.

"A cult of Christianity is a group of people, which claiming to be a Christian, embraces a particular doctrinal system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization, which (system) denies (either explicitly [definite] or implicitly [absolute]) one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian faith as taught in the sixty-six books of the Bible." (Alan W. Gomes, "Unmasking the Cults" Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995)

There are basic categories of cults:

- The esoteric cult groups which involves occultism and spiritism
- The mystical cult groups involves supernatural and secret things
- The dangerous cult groups involves physically harmful rituals
- The pseudo-Christian groups – fake Christianity
- The hyper-faith cult groups which spiritualize everything
- The Bible-based cult groups which uses the Bible
- The suicidal cult groups which involves violence and mass suicide
- The satanic cult groups which involves the worship of Satan and demons

### How to Identify a Cult of Christianity

Please take note that not all the symptoms listed below may manifest in a particular cult group:

1. They reject the Trinity of the Godhead and replace with their ism
2. They reject the deity of Christ
3. They reject the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ
4. They reject in the finished work of Christ
5. They reject the spiritual death of Christ on the cross.
6. They reject the doctrine of Christ' bodily resurrection
7. They reject Bible doctrine and replace it with their church doctrine
8. They reject the absolute authority of the Scripture and replace it with extra-biblical revelation
9. They reject the Universal Church and claim that they alone are saved or to be saved.
10. They reject the doctrine of eternal punishment
11. They *major* on minor Doctrines
12. They believe that their founder is *the* messenger of God
13. They give more emphasis on experience than Doctrine
14. They give more emphasis on direct revelations and visions from God
15. They fix the dates of the end times and/or the return of Christ
16. They oppose proper Bible interpretation (*hermeneutics*)
17. They occasionally get entangled in spiritism or occultism
18. They mix Christianity with other unbiblical Beliefs

### **What is the Occult?**

The word "occult" comes from the word *occultus* and it carries the idea of things hidden, secret and mysterious. Hoover list three distinct characteristics of the occult:

1. The occult deals with things secret or hidden.
2. The occult deals with operations or events which seem to depend on human powers that go beyond the five senses.
3. The occult deals with the supernatural, the presence of angelic or demonic forces.

[David W. Hoover, "How To Respond to the Occult," (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977, p. 8) as cited by Josh McDowell and Don Stewart in their book, "The Occult" published by Here's Life Publisher 1992.]

### **What is Heresy?**

Coming from the Greek *hairesis*, it means "choice" or "thing chosen." In the Greek New Testament, however, heresy usually means "faction" or "division" but in later church usage, heresy referred to a denial of a defined doctrine of the Christian faith. "Heretical" is the adjectival form of the word *heresy* (e.g., a heretical teaching), while a "heretic" is one who espouses heresy.

### **What is a Sect?**

Originally from the Latin word *secta* which means "a faction," "school of thought" or "political party." American Heritage Dictionary defines a sect as "religious body, especially, one that has separated from a larger denomination." "Within the Christian tradition, the sect constitutes a distinctive, persisting and separately organized group of believers who reject the established authorities, but who claim to adhere to the authentic elements of the faith." Thus, the term "sect" can refer to genuinely Christian groups that "have distanced" themselves from churches, and to some degree the predominant culture they represent, in order to emphasize one or more beliefs or practices they felt have been lost.

### **What is a religion?**

What is the meaning of "religion"? The word can be traced from Latin, *religare* which literally means, "to tie fast." A person who belongs to a certain religion is perhaps "tied fast" to a set of beliefs, values and practices of a spiritual leader.

They have common beliefs and reverence for a supernatural power or powers which they regard as a creator (creators) or and governor (or governors) of the universe which through out the years have become an institutionalized system.

We can also define religion as any institutionalized system of belief of people trying to reach, to know and to understand a deity or deities.

### **What is a false belief system?**

This is any [system of belief](#) that opposes the central teachings of the Christian faith. While all cults of Christianity are also false religion, not all false religion are cults of Christianity because not all religion claims to be Christian.

### **What is a Dangerous Religious Group (DRG)?**

These are any group which adheres to any religious beliefs but they tend to resort to violence, control, and exclusivism to achieve their spiritual goals thus inflicting physical and emotional harm which extends from within and without their own group.

### **Related Links**

Check out The Bereans' [cult listing](#), [Effective Evangelism](#) and [Evangelizing the Cults](#) and [Levels of Classification of Faith Groups](#). Please see also [Bible-Based Cults and Isms](#).

A CULT is a group of people, which claiming to be Christians embraces a particular doctrinal system taught by an individual or group of leaders, which denies one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian faith.

A CULT is a deviant group from orthodox Christianity that deviates from one or more of the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith.

A CULT is professing Christianity but denies and rejects the major doctrines of the Bible. The cults are professing Christians. Islam and Buddhism for example are not cults because they never claimed or called themselves as Christians.

The major cults in our country are the Jehovah's witnesses, the Mormons, the New Age movement, the Moonies, the Freemasons, the Christian Science, the SDA, the INC, the RC and most of the Full Gospels and Charismatic groups.

The cults deny intensely or cleverly some or all of the doctrines of the Christian faith while at the same time profess themselves as Christians.

The cults normally have a dogmatic and legalistic leadership structure with a closed ecclesiastical system.

The cults have some secrecy about their leadership personalities and people behind, organizational system, dogmatic teachings, and meetings.

The cults openly or clandestinely deny salvation by grace through faith alone.

They undermine the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ by requiring additional works or co-operation effort.

The cults are reducing the absolute authority and sufficiency of Scripture. They expressly accuse the Bible of containing errors.

The cults are using the Christian vocabulary-but they mean different things. The cults redefined biblical terms with different meaning for their own gains and benefits.

The cults have their own exclusive belief system and practices.

The cults by large, rejects and denies the doctrine of eternal punishment. Some says that hell and its fire is not literal fire or punishment. Some are teaching universalism – that all will be saved at the end. Some are teaching annihilation- that God will destroy into nothing. They teach that there is no conscious eternal suffering.

The cults emphasis on direct revelation or vision from God and that God spoke to their leaders.

The cults claimed signs and wonders in various forms. Some claims that they have raise a large numbers of genuine Christians from the death.

The cults put strong appeal to the false knowledge of the future. Because of widespread ignorance of the Bible, many are attracted to the one who seems to know what is ahead and are able to convincingly promote it. The cults thrive on their inaccurate prophecies of the future events.

According to the record of the major cults groups, majority of their converts are from mainline denomination churches who are ignorant of the Christian doctrines.

Let us take the warning of Hosea 4:6 seriously and take the radical steps to prepare for spiritual battle ahead of us [Ephesians 6:10-18]. We must be vigilance and discerning [1 Peter 4:7-8] proving all things related to our faith [1 Thessalonians 5:21].

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2003-2008